

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Yasuki Arakaki

Yasuki Arakaki was born and raised on the Big Island. He attended public school and Japanese-language school in Olaa, and graduated from Hilo High School.

In 1936, Arakaki began working for the Olaa Sugar Company as a carpenter helper. Soon after, he moved into purchasing and warehousing. He later became the supervisor, and eventually the safety director for Puna Sugar Company.

Arakaki joined the Democratic party in 1937 and became an active campaigner for the party. A long-time labor organizer, he was a leader in the ILWU (International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union) for twenty-one years, beginning in 1944.

Arakaki became the chairman of the state's nonpartisan campaign spending commission in 1973. In 1976, he became the deputy clerk of Hawai'i County.

He retired at the age of sixty-seven in 1984, but later resumed work for Hawai'i County government.

Tape Nos. 17-92-1-91 and 17-93-1-91

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Yasuki Arakaki (YA)

March 19, 1991

Hilo, Hawai'i

BY: Michi Kodama-Nishimoto (MK) and Daniel W. Tuttle, Jr. (DT)

[NOTE: At YA's request, 'Ōla'a will be spelled without diacritical markings throughout this transcript, i.e., Olaa. In the 1950s, the town's name was changed from Olaa to Kea'au; the company from Olaa Sugar Company to Puna Sugar Company. The change was made because of the sacredness of the Hawaiian word, "'Ōla'a."]

Joy Chong: The following is an interview with Yasuki Arakaki which took place on March 19, 1991, at the Hilo County Building. The interviewers were Dan Tuttle and Michiko Kodama-Nishimoto. This is videotape number one.

MK: This is an interview with Mr. Yasuki Arakaki on March 19, 1991, in Hilo, Hawai'i. Before I start the formal interview, I just want to explain the process. We're going to videotape interview you on your life, your union career, your government service, then we're going to transcribe the interview, present you with a transcript for you to review, change whatever you feel is necessary, and then what will be made available to the public and the libraries will be the edited version of the transcript and the videotape that will correspond to the edited version. Is that okay with you?

YA: Okay.

MK: I guess we could start off with your parents' background, who they were, and something about their background, their schooling, their jobs.

YA: Well, a few years back when Dr. [Edward D.] Beechert, history instructor at the University [of Hawai'i], asked me to help him conduct an oral history and he wanted me to gather some of the immigrants who came from Japan. So we convened at Kea'au. Then he asked a lot of questions. Then I was the translator. And my father happened to be one of them. So lots of question came like this, he says, "Mr. Arakaki, how many brothers you have?"

"Oh, I have a younger brother."

"Are you the oldest?"

He said, "Yeah."

"Why did you come to Hawai'i since you be the oldest? You know Japanese style, you know the oldest (usually) stay home. The younger one (may leave their home)."

"Oh, my brother wasn't [yet] born when I came here."

"Why did you come here?"

My father said during the Russo-Japanese war [1904-05], his uncle had a brewery. They made money. They borrowed some money to enlarge the brewery. The war ended. So they had no way of selling the liquor. And all the soldiers went back to Japan so they needed some money to return to the bank. So my father told his father, "Ey, there are some neighbors going to Hawai'i. Why don't you borrow some money for me to get a boat fare and I go to Hawai'i and work and help you pay the bill." So he borrowed \$125, thereabouts. He was not a contract labor, so on his own he came. He landed at the Honoka'a landing on a boat, the rowboat, on a landing. He spent about three months or four months in Kohala. The place was kind of windy and rainy so he decided to go work at Olaa Sugar Company. So he left Kohala and then the rest of his life he worked at Olaa Sugar Company.

My father was illiterate. He was not taught at school. He never been to school. Then this idea of earning the money and go back [to Japan] didn't work out all right. What happened was my grandma told my mother, they were married in Japan already in Okinawa, she told her, "Hey, you heard that many of the workers that left Japan is shacking up with natives? I think you better go in Hawai'i and stay with your husband." Well, she came. My mother was illiterate also. She gave birth to eleven children and I happen to be the third. So bringing up eleven children was not an easy task because both of them were illiterate. So they had the most menial job in the plantation.

My mother never worked in the plantation but because she got to bring up the children, she raised chicken, pigs. She used to carry that approximately eighty-pound weight of pig swill (from) the various houses in the (plantation labor) camp. Carried that about half a mile away. She raised pig. That brought some protein in the family. To get cash she used to wash laundry for single (Filipino laborers). She was getting a dollar half [\$1.50] a month. And those days no more washing machine so she got to use firewood (to) make hot water. I remember she used to use a big stick and pound the laundry on the board trying to get all the dirt out. These were some of the experiences that she went through in order to keep us (fed and clothed).

We went to Japanese[-language] school every day after (attending public) school. Then my mother used to tell us, "Change your clothes, hang them behind the door, and there is a patched clothes there to replace and take care your school clothes." And the reason why she wanted us to do this because she want the clothes that I wore goes to my younger brother, and I was wearing my older brother's clothes. And Japanese call that *sagari*. You know, hand-me-down stuff. So we preserved, try to not to rip our clothes, our school clothes. Whenever the clothes come old, my mother used to put some patches on so that can cover the hole. We were using this kind of clothes normal time at home.

Whenever we come home from school, we have to help (our) mother. Mother's usually in the pig pen. We go down the pig pen and help her clean up the pen. And then in back of the pen there was a huge (vegetable) garden. We used manure from the pig. We used to raise

vegetables. You know, oftentimes in the plantation life we have surplus vegetables, surplus fruit, none of them had refrigerators. So when the harvest time comes, we used to share among all the neighborhood. All the surplus used to go to the neighbors and then their surplus used to come to us. If we just try to describe to the kids that are born today, when we talk about communal living, they going say, "What? You Communist?" They don't understand. But it's a typical communal living, you know. Survival to help each other. This is the way we grew up in the plantation (camps).

We didn't have any private bath, per se. We had a communal bath. The plantation would supply the firewood to a guy who ran the community bath. Because the community bath owner has to chop the wood and make the fire, we pay them about twenty-five cents a month per person. So in our case we (had) eleven children so that's \$2.75 for children, twenty-five cents each. (Parents including, total \$3.25 per month.)

Our toilet was not in-house. Our toilet were communal-type of toilet. There's a huge cesspool and there is a building on the top and they have that toilet seat made of lumber. There's a hole on that you can put a cover on. Cesspool, whatever we drain from the kitchen used to have an open flume, wooden flume. It washes down an open flume to the lower part of the camp. There's a huge cesspool, not even cover on. They dump everything in the cesspool. So that's the way plantation living was.

We had perquisites. Dispensary, we go to the doctor, they give us medicine. Houses were given to us. Most of the house, the floor, one by twelve. So you can see the cracks [through] the floor. The Japanese use *goza*, you know, that mat. So we used the mat over to cover the (cracks). It was kind of simplistic but we were comfortable.

We didn't have any pipeline water. (Roof) rainwater in the water tank and this is the way we collect the water for drink. Because it's communal everybody working together, helping each other, it was nice. For example, if a person gets married, the whole camp get together and make the wedding (party). If somebody dies, the whole camp get together and make the funeral. In those days, we don't have mortuary supplying the coffin, so my parents used to buy the lumber and make the coffin. And buy those black satin sheet and then tack it on, make one coffin. This is the way it was handled on wedding and the funeral. So this kind of experience, I don't think it'll come back again. I hope it does, but it won't. In a so-called democracy like in America, when you have a society of "me, myself and I," it'll never come back to the idea of this so-called "we."

When I was going to Japanese[-language] school, I studied very hard. I was one of the person who make top grades in the class right straight through. I had planned to go to Waseda University so I took correspondent course (from) Waseda University in my eleventh and twelfth grade. While we were growing up as a minor, I remember every Saturday morning the principal of the [Japanese-language] school, a woman, she have a hairdo, you know, kind of lumpy up there and they have a comb, they call that *kanzashi* with a kimono, not with a dress, a big obi. She's from Japan. She was the principal. She never smiled, very serious. She used to lecture us on ethics (and morality). One thing that I really appreciated growing up is having that kind of teaching that we got from this minister's wife who was the principal. One of the ethic violation is something like this: If a person meet an older person on the street and you just pass by without saying anything to her or him, it's unethical. You have to stop in front of the person, older person, and bow your head down and say, "*Ohayō gozaimasu*,"

good morning, or "*Konbanwa*," good evening. These are some of the things that we were told to do. Whenever you find something on the street, or in the school ground, take it to the school principal or to your teacher. Tell her, "I found this there." Don't put it in your pocket. And one thing they told us to respect is to share things with others. When they say cheating, that means you copied somebody else's work. Don't do that. You earn everything what you do by yourself. Respect fellow man. This is the kind of indoctrination we had while we going Japanese school.

I was kind of rascal so I got *batsu* (disciplined). One day the principal asked me, "Did you make sword with the slats that's on the temple?"

"(Yes), I made sword. I (have) sharp knife."

"Did you take that slats from the temple?"

I said, "No, I didn't."

"Well, who did?"

I said, "I don't know. I never seen anybody take (the slats from the temple building)." But my friend bring the slats, I carve them out nice so I make nice sword for them.

"Who gave you the stick?"

I said, "I'm not going to tell you."

"Well," she said, "Until you tell me who gave you the stick, you going to have *batsu*. You not going to go home tonight."

I said, "Well, too bad." They locked me up in a room. About six o'clock in the evening, they brought the big *nigiri-meshi* with *ume* inside. I was so mad I can't get hungry. So I took the *nigiri-meshi* I smeared on the wall. Whatever left over, I smeared on the floor. Then I knew how I'm going to escape that night. There was a window on the left side. I went down there to feel if I can push that window up, if possible. And luckily outside that window there was a (cast iron) pipe running up. So I pushed the window, I (grabbed) the (cast iron) pipe and went down. I ran away from that confinement. My father knew I had *batsu* that day so he asked me, "You got *batsu* today. Look what time now. It's six o'clock."

Well, I was afraid he's going to lick [i.e., beat] me so I tried to get away. He grabbed me and he gave me dirty licking. I cried. He went away. My mother had a package of food for me hidden. When I got a licking, she told me to go away and have this meal away from my father. So I had a meal hiding. Next day I went to school, I got *batsu* again. So the principal asked me, "Why did you escape from the window?"

I told the principal, "I will not confess. I don't want to convict anyone that I had nothing to do. The person tell me to make sword, I make. But you not going to force me to tell you who was the person. You can lock me up every single night until I come twenty years old but I'm not going to tell you."

So she said, "Well, there's nothing I can do. You can go home."

I was one hour late. My father asked me again, "You got *batsu* again?" I didn't say anything. I got another licking. Those days, the teachers was always right. The parent don't ask you question why you got *batsu*, you get licking. This is the kind of upbringing I was brought up under. A strict discipline community, strict discipline Japanese school.

When I became a junior and senior year, I was the top student. I was prepared to go to Waseda University. When I had to ask my dad, "Do you have money to put me through school?"

He said, "Son, I'm sorry, (we have) eight more kids behind you I got to feed. You make *kugaku*."

Japanese *kugaku* means suffer school. Suffer means you got to work one year, go school one year, then you work again one year, then you go work again. So a four-year school going take you eight. At that time, I decided, there's eight more behind me, they needed my support. So I decided I will not go to Japanese university. I decided I'm going to work. I was (then) eighteen years old.

I began working and luckily when I was in high school—oh, how I went to high school. My father had a Model-T bus. He bought that bus through *tanomoshi*. Let me explain a little bit about *tanomoshi*. *Tanomoshi* is something like credit union where the people in the camp get together. Maybe each one contributes five dollars a month, or ten dollars, or whatever the amount is going to be, and if you have ten people, that's hundred dollars, right? Ten times ten is hundred dollars. With that hundred dollars, the highest bidder will get that. You will get only once because you got your chance. The one that starts the *tanomoshi* is called *oya*. Japanese in *oya* is parent, okay? This person will do all the collection for the ten times over and distribute the money. The guys who never got any of their share in the period of time, that person going to get the interest. So the guys [who] would take them first don't have interest already because you take them first. This is the way *tanomoshi* work. My father bought the Model-T Ford, a sampan bus. My brother, my older brother, went to school two years ahead of me, he was (driving) the bus. Right after he graduated, I took over the bus. From Olaa to Hilo High [School] was about ten miles. They used to pay me a dollar half [\$1.50] a month. We have eight passengers including myself. So we went to Hilo High in that manner. We went to school from Olaa to Hilo High. And those days, Hilo High was the only high school in east Hawai'i.

My sister above me and my sister below me sacrificed not going to school after eighth grade and they (worked as maids at *Haole* bosses' homes. They) gave (their earnings) to the parents so that we can go to school. After I graduated, I found out that I cannot go to Japan school so I (decided) to go to work. Luckily, when I went to high school, the subject matter I took came to be a very useful educational background for me on the work that I pursued after I left the school. Okay. When I went to the plantation, [i.e., Olaa Sugar Company] usually you go to the cane field. You start off in the cane field. So they asked me, "What kind of course you took at school?"

I said, "I took up chemistry, I took up biology, I took up astronomy, I took up accounting (and business math)." I said, "I took up mechanical drawing."

"Oh, you took mechanical drawing? Can you draw?"

I say, "Yeah."

"Blueprint?"

I say, "Yeah."

"I tell you what, you go to the carpenter shop, I think there is an opening for you as a carpenter helper." So I began in a carpenter shop. That's where I began. I didn't go to the cane field. When I was doing carpenter work, I had to climb those tall flumes fifty feet high. It's made of lumber so the carpenters are going to (maintain) the flume. Oh, I was trembling up there. During the off season they sent us down to the factory to repair those cane cars made of lumber. When I was repairing the cane car, one of the welders came and told me, "Yasu, do you want to have a job in purchasing, in warehousing? You don't have to climb any more flumes." Probably I think that's the best idea. So I applied for the job. They gave me exam. I passed the exam. Then I worked in warehousing purchasing. That's why I entered in the factory area from 1936.

DT: So you had gone to school in Olaa right? English school, I guess.

YA: Right.

DT: And Japanese[-language] school after school.

YA: Correct.

DT: Then you go to Hilo High and you're mostly interested in science. You would concentrate most on chemistry and biology and (astronomy).

YA: Those are selective-type of courses. But we were required at high school basic, like geography, history, those are required subjects, okay?

DT: Has anybody there particularly interests you? I mean any teacher have an affect upon you that caused you to be concerned about your fellow man, let us say?

YA: We didn't have any sociological input, per se. But because I never went to a library in my life, never, I never borrow library [books] in my life till today. I don't know what is library, okay? I did all my reading, *Hawai'i Hochi*, *Nippu Jiji*, *Hawai'i Mainichi [Shinbun]*, English and Japanese.

DT: Newspapers, in other words.

YA: Right. Both sides [i.e., languages], okay.

DT: But not books?

YA: No books.

DT: No books.

YA: Okay. If you go my house, my house is a library, every shelf [there] (are) books. I don't go borrow, I buy books. Most of my books based on sociology. Based on sociology.

DT: You buy books about people?

YA: Right.

DT: And you did even back then?

YA: Right. I acquire books (for my permanent references).

DT: You didn't want to borrow, you wanted the book for yourself.

YA: Right. I don't smoke, I don't drink. That's my bad habit.

DT: It's not a bad habit. (Chuckles)

YA: Well, you know I was very much interested in history when I was in school because I have to read *Nippu Jiji*, *Hawai'i Hochi*. So I study the Asian history, okay? I learned my European history in English school. Asian history in English school, they don't teach you. So I learned my Asian history by newspaper and magazines, Japanese magazines. Then on the American history and the world history, I studied in school. I love history. I was a student of Euphrates, Tigris, Mesopotamia, (Gobi Desert), all the epochal civilizations I made an in-depth study. I studied in-depth as to the creation of mankind and everything.

DT: Where did you get this interest from? Your family you said were not interested. Your mother and father were illiterate.

YA: (Yes), they were illiterate. They both (didn't go to school).

DT: But because you can't read and write doesn't mean that you don't think, you don't talk. They must have talked about these things with you, or . . .

YA: Well, when I was about eight years old, I asked my mom, "Mom, why is it that I'm extra white? Why is it my nose is different? Mom, why is it? Why is it I have blond hair (on my arms)?" I asked my mom. She was frightened. She said, you know, after a long delay, "Well, I want to let you know that about 300 years ago, there were sailing ships plying the South China Sea and a [Dutch] sailing ship got shipwrecked offshore in Okinawa. The Okinawan fishermen rescued them and brought them to shore. So there's a lot of European blood in the Okinawan group. Probably, she said, I might be part *Orandajin* [Dutch] (from Holland).

MK: Maybe we'll stop right here for changing tape.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

JC: The following is a continuation of the Yasu Arakaki interview. This is videotape number two.

MK: This is tape two with Mr. Yasu Arakaki. We're just going to back up a little bit. We're curious about your reading Japanese newspapers and your wanting to go to Waseda Daigaku when a lot of other people of your generation wouldn't even dream of going to a *daigaku* or wouldn't read Japanese papers. Why is it that you're different?

YA: Well, I don't think I'm any more different than anyone. Probably I'm lucky that I didn't go to Japan because one of my classmates, he went to Japan, got drafted in the Japanese military, 'cause anyone who was born before 1925 [was considered] a dual citizen. Many of my classmates fought the war for the Japanese.

But your question asks me how come I got interested in the Japanese study. Okay, let me explain. As a historian, most of you know what I mean by Monroe Doctrine. Monroe Doctrine dictates to the U.S. Congress that Central and South America is American domain. It was advocated by President [James] Monroe [in 1823]. [Prior to World War II], there was a declaration by the Japanese government called the [Greater East] Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. You remember? Okay. That doctrine of [Greater East] Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere and the Monroe Doctrine is identical. What it means is, Monroe Doctrine says to the people of Asia and Europe, "Hands off Central and South America. That's my domain." On the other hand, the Japanese doctrine says, "You leave Asia for me. That's my domain."

This is the time, this was 1934. I was junior in high school. Japan moving in to Manchuria, using their Asia co-prosperity doctrine, they moving to Manchuria. At that time, I thought that the Japanese going to be the Asian power, the United States going to be the central power, because Europe, the downfall of the British empire, so United States going to be the world power. So I figured I can contribute to the Americans if I can study Japanese and teach the Japanese language at a university on the Mainland. This was my reasoning, I was going to be the medium to teach so that these two powerful countries will get together economically, politically, work together and have peace in the world. This was my dream and objective. That's the reason why I try to study Japanese. Unfortunately, what happened was I wrote a thesis on my graduation at Japanese school. The title again was "Monroe *shugi tai*, Asia *kofuku shugi*." When the principal of the school, he was also a minister, he was a very educated person, he had Ph.D. degree in philosophy, an unusual person. When he saw my paper, he got frightened. He said, "Will you destroy this paper?"

I said, "Why?"

"You're challenging both doctrine and it seems like I'm the guy advocate it. I'm going to be in trouble. You know, I am a minister who had privilege to come to teach in Hawai'i. As soon as this goes in the hands of the U.S. authority, they're going to ship me back to Japan. Please destroy it."

I wrote a paper on the history of the Monroe Doctrine, the history of the [Greater East Asia] Co-Prosperity Sphere in Japanese. I was eighteen-year-old boy at that time. So if you talk about history, I was a historian when I was eighth grade. How many of the eighth-graders at that time would think about [Greater East] Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere or Monroe Doctrine? I

don't think you have too many. I'm one of the few. So that's the kind of background I come from. You know, as a person who know some international affairs.

MK: You know, with your reading, say, the *Nippu Jiji* and you're learning about the Japanese expansionism occurring at that time, were you also conversing with issei and other nisei about what was happening?

YA: No. We didn't have the time. Because our time is so limited, we got to go to school, come back, go to Japanese school. As soon as Japanese school is over, we have to report to Mom. We got to go to the pig pen, garden. Then when we come home, it's dark, we make homework. Next day go to English school, go to Japanese school. We just didn't have the time to play.

MK: So you weren't talking with your parents . . .

YA: No, no, no.

MK: . . . and issei about . . .

YA: We had no time to discuss because they are busy, too.

DT: You really had these dreams as a young person then, realistic or unrealistic, running through your head, right? That you might make a contribution in this sort of . . .

YA: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

DT: Sort of melding these two societies together.

YA: Right, right, right.

DT: That was a . . .

YA: By language, by Japanese language.

DT: Japanese language, which is sort of a first step.

YA: Right.

DT: A necessary step you might say, to rapprochement if we could call it that.

YA: Right, right.

DT: In other words, of getting together. And this is most unusual, as you've already indicated.

YA: Well, in order to do that, I had to take the course from Waseda. If I'm going to enter the university, I got to be able to pass the exam. And they're not going to give you *katakana*, *hiragana*. So I studied hard to learn the *kanji*. I think I had about 1,000 *kanji* here, which is averaging about, normally, you know, 1,000 is pretty good. I had 1,000 *kanji* here. And these are some of the things that I really worked hard to go to Japan to [Waseda] University.

- DT: It must have been terribly frustrating then when you worked so hard, concentrated so much, had so much idealism, and then not to be able to go.
- YA: No, I was not frustrated because I was a dreamer, because we had eight more behind me. Two of my sisters sacrificed to put me through school so immediately I said, "Mom, until I get married, I won't open up my paycheck. I'll give you my money." I never did until I was twenty-five years old. I started working at eighteen and a half, okay. I never open up the (pay) envelope, not one time. She gave me five dollars per month for my spending money and she took the rest to pay the bills.
- DT: So you had your dream and five dollars a month?
- YA: Right. No, it's not a big sacrifice, you know, they put me through high school. Many of the other classmates never go high school. They worked in the cane fields.
- DT: Well, we recognize your obligations, there is no question about that. But at the same time, it was a sacrifice. Let's call it what it was. I mean . . .
- YA: I made up. Hey I made up for everything, what I never got going to Japanese school. I learned everything in Japanese school. I served mankind, I was a labor leader, I was a Democratic party leader, (and never filled) my pocket.
- DT: So no regrets?
- YA: No regrets.
- DT: No regrets.
- YA: I served mankind. The same way I wanted to be, let me say it, to be a contact between U.S. and Japan. I did it locally. And I think I accomplished a hell of a lot in my tenure in life. I have no regret. No regret.
- DT: Well, I can't argue with you about that. You're very much at peace with yourself. And yet one does have to think, I think, from time to time of what might have been, you know, and some of the circumstances which sort of put a cap on some of your ambitions. But then let's look—okay, so you had to keep your feet on the ground, as the saying might go, as opposed to your head in the sky. In the process of doing that, you began to think in terms of helping your fellow citizens in the labor union. This hadn't been possible before the [19]30s. But in the United States, it became suddenly possible. You took advantage of that opportunity, did you not?
- YA: Well, I had opportunities normal person may not have. I got kicked out from the Mikado Club because they say that I'm not going to be a good ball player. My older brother was a catcher, one of the best in the team, but he couldn't help me at all. So when I got in the Surfrider Athletic Club, a lot of things start changing. That's the club that was responsible in having peace in Olaa during the war [World War II]. The club led the community in a lot of projects. That club was the prime mover in the Democratic party. That club was the primary organizer of the sugar workers. I happened to be the president of both clubs (and a parliamentarian), you see, so I had an opportunity to lead. I had an advantage over ordinary

people. Well, I was kind of rebel in a sense. I was small in size. I'm only 110 pounds, five [feet], four [inches]. The size didn't mean too much.

One more thing I think you folks should know about me. I'm an Okinawan. As I was growing up, I knew I was not (a) Japanese. I was not treated as Japanese. So when a person is discriminated by different *kenjin*, you have a feeling of fighting back, you know. And you unite among the Okinawans to show to the rest of the *kenjin* that we're not sub-human. We are equal with them. So if you see today, many of the business people on the Big Island, the Kaneshiro family, the Food Fair, and many of the merchants in Honolulu, the Star Market, many of the markets, if you see, is [owned by] Okinawans. And Okinawans, because they are discriminated, they stick together and help each other out. Today, 1991, the strongest is the provincial group that stick together, fourth generation Okinawans are them. Very seldom you see the Hiroshima *kenjinkai* or Kumamoto *kenjinkai*. The one *kenjinkai* more dominant who are in Hawai'i for many years are sticking together the way they do. This is the background I have. And I think, I don't know if I should tell you this, but when that question came to me by Mr. Arnold Hiura, I think, he was working on the *Uchinanchu* book [i.e., *Uchinanchu: A History of Okinawans in Hawai'i*], and the question came something like this, he said, "Did you get active in the union because you were Okinawan?"

I said, "No."

"Did Okinawans get a lot of benefit from joining the union?"

I said, "Yes." And I said, "One of the things that happened in my life was this. I had a girlfriend from Kumamoto *ken*. The mother didn't know that I was going with her because the older brother was very close to me. So one day the mother saw me at (their) home. The brother wasn't around. So she got real suspicious and she told the daughter, "I fear that that boy (is) falling in love with you." She said, "Don't let the infatuation end up in matrimony." The girl didn't ask the mother why. But she asked me. We met behind the temple. Then she asked me, "My mother said don't let the infatuation end up in matrimony because you're an Okinawan. What did my mother mean?" Well, I got deeply hurt naturally. It wasn't my fault that I'm an Okinawan.

I remember when we were young my mother used to say, "Who are you going to get married to? Don't bring Moloka'i family in your home." You know, Moloka'i is leper [i.e., Moloka'i is the island Hansen's Disease patients were sent]. In Japanese, leper means hereditary sickness, so don't bring those woman in the home because you going get leper children. So immediately I translate it and say to this girl, "I'm a leper." That was the final get-together and I felt that I'm a low-class Japanese. That gave me some impetus to prove that I'm not a leper. I'm going to prove to her and others that I'm equal or better. This is one of the strong desire I had and I think she helped me plenty by asking me that kind of silly question. So I think that's one of the impetus I got that . . .

DT: Whatever happened to the girlfriend?

YA: Unfortunately, when I was seventh grade, this teacher was my seventh-grade teacher. This girl went to Hilo High, this same teacher was promoted to Hilo High, she took lesson from the teacher also. And they were fourteen years different, the teacher and my girlfriend. She and I were only four year difference. So later on, she graduated high school, the parents left

for Japan. They took the whole family. The daughter went to Japan, too. And lo and behold, not too long after, she came home and she was Mrs. Nakamura. (Chuckles) So she married my teacher. They're happy, I guess. I have no qualms.

MK: So in a way with your being Okinawan, being discriminated against, later on the Democratic party and the union became vehicles in which you could sort of right or help right the wrongs that you noticed, partly having experienced discrimination.

YA: Well the Democratic party is not *kenjin*, per se. Democratic party is multi-national [i.e., multi-ethnic]. So the enemy that you draw is different than the struggle between the Japanese. And fortunately the Surfrider Athletic Club was multi-national. That is the reason why it gave me a lot of good footing on being a Democratic party and then the ILWU [International Longshoremen's & Warehousemen's Union].

DT: That's interesting. We'll stop and pick it up on the next tape.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

JC: The following is a continuation of the Yasu Arakaki interview. This is videotape number three.

MK: This is tape number three with Mr. Yasuki Arakaki and again we're going to back up a little bit to have a fuller discussion of what the Surfrider Athletic Club was.

YA: Not too long after we graduated high school, there were many outcasts from the various Japanese clubs, like (Mikados, Homares,) Hinode, Machis, Shinyūs, and because they were outcasts, they were not able to play in the league. So we decided to get together, all the outcasts, we organized our own club, then we elected our officers. We had a weekly meeting under the parliamentary procedure, and I was the parliamentarian so they elected me as the president. Then by so doing, a couple of Hawaiians and couple of Filipinos join in, couple of Portuguese join in also. But because we have to join the Japanese league, those nationality other than Japanese were not able to play in that particular league. But later on when the war came and we organize our own league, it was a multi-ethnic league. We invited different community people to join and we say Surfrider I, Surfrider II, Whippet I, Whippet II. We organized our own league with the advice and consent of the military governor's office.

And while we were gathering during the war, it was blackout, as you folks know. Nighttime we had no way of going anywhere. So the only place we can convene is inside the "casino" at the plantation gym. So that's the reason why the military governor's office helped us darken the window and entertain the troops during the war. Surfrider Athletic Club was kind of, you know, really popular in the community because that's the only group that the military governor's group honored and respected. So many of the Japanese clubs lost their name and title and then their organization can't help but join our club. So we had a big, big immense club under the name of Surfrider. In so doing, we have to be able to carry out what the military governor's office wanted us to do. And in the area of USO [United Service Organizations], we have to go and look for those pretty girls and we have to take them back [home] so that the parents not going to fear that they not going to come home on time. So we controlled all that.

DT: If I may interject here, you're talking about playing and sports activities, athletic club, this was principally sort of year-round baseball, wasn't it?

YA: Right.

DT: It was part, incidentally, maybe a little bit of swimming, perhaps. But not very much, right?

YA: No. Very little.

DT: You weren't going out on surfboards . . .

YA: No, no, no.

DT: . . . as the name might imply?

YA: No. No.

DT: It was mostly baseball . . .

YA: Mostly baseball, yes.

DT: Which had become pretty much a part of the Hawai'i community.

YA: Right.

DT: I mentioned off-camera, I think, that Steere Noda was doing things in about this period. He was bringing the [New York] Yankees team and taking them to Japan.

YA: Correct. Correct.

DT: You didn't go on any of those excursions . . .

YA: No.

DT: Did you ever play any of the O'ahu teams?

YA: You see, the Surfrider [Athletic] Club concentrated in the Olaa and (Kea'au) area alone. Because we have immense number of workers there, we have to keep them busy. And the interesting thing that happened was when we organize a team, the Kūlani Correctional [Facility] outfit (joined our league) and they were semi-pros in the prison. They contacted me and said is it possible for have them join the league. I didn't expect they were semi-pros. So I said, "Okay. You're welcome." And every time they play at the Olaa ball park, every whack they give, that ball go in the cane field. That's home run, right? Four baggers. And they won the champion. We had no chance against them. But they contributed a hell of a lot for us because during the war, the military asked us to organize a blood bank. Then we organize a blood bank and then, you know, funny thing, many of the Filipinos for some reason they're not too enthusiastic in giving blood. But we make up with those Kūlani prisoners over there. They were always so happy to give us (their blood). So we always filled the quota. So on this island, during the war, I think, we gave one of the most blood in the bank and so we

contribute in that area during the war.

DT: It really became, as the war came upon you, beyond baseball, you became really community . . .

YA: That's right. We were the hub during the war because all other clubs were closed down by the military. The only active club which was sanctioned by the military governor was Surfrider Athletic Club.

DT: Just by accident of the name?

YA: Correct. By accident because luckily we didn't have Japanese name.

DT: And it also perhaps helped because of your multi-ethnic composition, do you think?

YA: Well that, in order to get a Surfrider [Athletic] Club, you cannot use Japanese right? You have to have all mixed, so that's the reason why we named "Surfriders."

DT: Now all this time as your club was developing and moving into the war period, you were working, what, for the [Olaa] Sugar Company?

YA: Right.

DT: And mostly in purchasing and warehousing?

YA: Right. I began in the factory as purchasing and warehousing. Right. Something interesting happened. When I was twenty-five years old, I asked my mom, "Can I borrow some money?"

She said, "What are you going to do with the money?"

"I'm going to buy a plane ticket." This was in the midst of the war.

She said, "What are you going to do with the plane ticket?"

"Oh, I'm going to bring home a girlfriend from Honolulu." Then she gave me the money. And I brought her back. We were all transported to Waiānuenue and Kamehameha Avenues on the corner. All the buses go to the airport but no visitors were allowed there. When we came back on the bus, I got two suitcases, my girlfriend's suitcase and mine. And I saw my mother on the corner waiting. As soon as she saw her that's the first time she saw her. And my mother saw me following this woman, she gave her a big bear hug. I never expected that because sometime few years back my mother said, "I understand you going with one part-Hawaiian girl." So the person that came to see me question me about my mother's feeling, I told this man to tell my mother, "I'm not going to get married until I'm age twenty-five. If I do, please accept whoever I bring home to be the daughter-in-law." The first time, that's the only time my mother saw my girlfriend, and when she gave her that bear hug, I was crying to myself. I said, "Mom, thank you very much for accepting a part-Hawaiian girl instead of one Japanese or Okinawan girl." And from that day on until my mother passed away, they were the closest. They loved each other very much.

My wife is part-Hawaiian. She's Senator [Julian R.] Yates' daughter. But my wife today know how to cook Okinawan food better than some of my sisters because my mother taught her all the Okinawan delicacy. Somewhat, my wife take after example of my mother and I'm very happy that I have a very good wife that supported me. All these years I got involved in the labor movement, the Democratic party. For twenty-one years I live in suitcase and briefcase. I was never home. She brought up four of my sons. Luckily my sons went to Kamehameha School. They are two years apart. So the first one went two years, and the next two years the other one go. And by the time one graduate, one go to university so then you get one left, one left, so she had easier time as the children were growing up. And because my kids were part-Hawaiian, all of them graduated Kamehameha School, every one of them.

DT: So almost fifty years, then, married now.

YA: Almost fifty years, correct. Yeah, almost fifty years. I'm very fortunate. I'm really unusually fortunate because I don't think an ordinary woman can take what I went through because . . .

DT: How did you get acquainted with her in Honolulu? If you're down here . . .

YA: No. She was . . .

DT: She went to Honolulu from here . . .

YA: No. She was living in Olaa. What happened was, when I was going down to the warehouse every morning, we passed a place where she was living, six o'clock in the morning. She catch the bus to go to school at seven o'clock in the morning. She was going to Hilo Intermediate [School] at that time, I think. She was living with the oldest sister and helping the sister watch the nephews and nieces there. This is how I met her. One day I saw her hanging the clothes up on this clothesline. So I asked the neighbor, "Who's that pretty girl there?"

"Oh, that's Mrs. Bertlemann's sister."

"Oh, I see." I said, "Why don't you invite her down the warehouse to use the scale because the neighbor's son is an engineer's son. They used to use my scale down at the warehouse." So I said, "Why don't you invite her come use the scale." And lo and behold one day she showed up. Then I was introduced and that was the beginning. (Chuckles)

DT: And you didn't have to ask Julian Yates' permission or anything like that?

YA: Well, you know, we didn't have too much trouble with Julian but we had problem with the sisters. They were not happy because I'm a Japanese and this happened during the war. So they were not happy. So we never had contact for twenty-two years with that family.

DT: Oh, really.

YA: When my second son graduated Kamehameha School, that's when my father-in-law, was invited by Bishop Estate president Mr. [Richard] Lyman. They were very close friend. They told him that, "Hey, your grandson is graduating Kamehameha School, I think you better come to the graduation."

And then he says, "Why?"

"Your [grand]son is going to be the recipient of the graduate receiving the highest academic honor from group seven to group one. He's going to receive that honor so I want you to come up and visit to receive your honor for your grandson." So that's the first time in twenty-two years we happen to meet him.

DT: That was in the [19]60s then?

YA: Right.

DT: In the [19]60s you finally got the family together.

YA: The interesting thing, as my father-in-law getting older, well, he was a little blind, kind of stubborn, and many of the sisters are not too happy with him. So one night we got a phone call, my wife answered, it was eight thirty in the night. My wife said, "Will you go pick up my father at the Bertlemann's?"

I said, "Okay." Then when I went down there, he had a suitcase, you know. I say, "What are you doing, Grandpa?"

"No, I want you to take me to one of the hotels in Hilo." Oh, I knew at that time that something went wrong there so I told, "Grandpa, I think you better come talk to your daughter first before you go to the hotel." So I drove him up and I left the father in the car and I told my wife, "I think you better talk to your dad. I'm not going to take him to the hotel tonight because everybody in town know him and they going to laugh at him because they know he get children here and he going to the hotel." So my wife convinced him to come up the house and I said I going take him the next day. I didn't. After they had a long talk, he decided that he'll stay one night. He stayed my house for the next four years. (DT chuckles) My wife took care of him.

DT: And made you feel good, too.

YA: Oh, yes. I was made the person to handle his funeral, his estate. And unfortunately the rest of the family was not happy because I am in-law, right? And I was the administrator of the estate.

DT: So all's well that ends well, you might say.

YA: Right, right.

DT: I wonder now if we could switch and get to your—in spite of difficulties, a pretty happy family situation although, let's say it turned out all right in the end and it made you feel good—we go back to the union activities now. How did you get—you worked, this was a matter of work activity, you must have felt that working conditions could be vastly improved and set out to do something about it.

YA: You know in the [19]40s, the year of (1943), the year I got married, some interesting things happened, I think, had something to do with this union organization. The manager of the

plantation [i.e., Olaa Sugar Company] asked me to come to his office and he said, "Mr. Arakaki, I understand you going with Julian Yates' daughter." He told me, "If you intend to marry her, I want you to quit the plantation."

I said, "Why?"

"Because the Bertlemanns are not happy the sister marry one ordinary common worker in the plantation."

So Surfrider Athletic Club prepared a petition sent to the manager asking him why do he poke his nose in a personal affair. He refused to accept the petition. I have the petition at home. June 28, (1943) I got married. December 1944, the manager came to see me down at the warehouse. He said, "The neighboring plantation, Waiākea Mill [Company], is organized under the AFL [American Federation of Labor]. I'm sure they going to come to Olaa Sugar Company and organize here, too. I want your favor."

I said, "What my favor?"

"I want you to organize a union. I will recognize without consent election. I don't want you to affiliate with the Mainland union."

I said, "I'll think about it."

DT: Okay. He wanted you to organize a company union. We're going to have to stop here and change tape.

END OF SIDE TWO

TAPE NO. 17-93-1-91; SIDE ONE

JC: The following is an interview with Yasuki Arakaki. This is videotape number four and the last of this session.

MK: Okay. This is tape number four with Mr. Yasuki Arakaki.

DT: Mr. Arakaki, I think we left this on the last tape when you'd just been asked to do a dastardly sort of thing, I think, in union language, to organize a company union. Is that really true?

YA: Well, that was his attempt because subsequent to that, organizer from Waiākea Mill [Company] came to see me to organize the sugar workers affiliated with the AFL. Not too long after that, Jack [H.] Kawano and five more of his organizers came to visit us. Then, Dakujaku, the one that came from Waiākea Mill [Company], his explanation was not conclusive. I heard, separately, AFL is a craft union and CIO [Congress of Industrial Organizations] is a union from top to the bottom. If we're going to organize sugar workers, we cannot organize the carpenters in one union, the machinists in one union, you know. Everybody got to be in one union. So we figured that the best way to join in a union is Congress of Industrial Organizations. Well, it never take too long. Jack Kawano and the gang

came.

DT: They were not CIO people, no.

YA: No, they were CIO.

DT: They were CIO at the time?

YA: Right.

DT: This is . . .

YA: You see, ILWU is an affiliate of the Congress of Industrial Organization.

DT: At that time. Okay.

YA: Right. Harry Bridges, the president of the ILWU, was the regional director of the West Coast CIO. He was the chief. So when Jack Kawano and his gang came, their explanation was very, very interesting. First of all, this is the kind of line of talk which we got caught hook, line, and sinker. He said, "Did you know that the railroad workers that haul your sugar from your mill to the factory belong to the CIO?" We didn't know. "Do you know the longshoremen that load the sugar on the ship is CIO?" Well, I heard about that. "You heard about the longshoremen in Crockett, California [sugar refinery] that unloads the sugar is CIO? And all the guys working in Crockett, California on the initial stage of making the sugar is CIO?" We didn't know that. "What we're asking you to join the union from the time you plant the cane and make the sugar and you haul the sugar and you refine the sugar should be one big union. Make lot of sense?" Wonderful. Wonderful. So we bought that hook, line, and sinker. It didn't take too long. We voted to join the CIO. Later on we found out they were ILWU. But we didn't care because they was CIO.

DT: Okay, well that's something that happened on the Mainland. That they became ILWU having problems within the CIO, right?

YA: Right, right.

DT: That was none of your making at all out here.

YA: No, no.

DT: It was just it sort of happened to you. So . . .

YA: So this is how we began and then . . .

DT: And I'll bet that took care of most of your Surfrider Club, too. I'll bet most of them were openly members of the union. (Chuckles)

YA: Right, right. When we began organizing the sugar worker, the Hawai'i Employment Relations Act was not on the book yet. Then we need to get that act passed because we got to organize agricultural worker. We only organized at that time the factory workers. So we started with

the factory [i.e., sugar mill] workers. National Labor Relations Act [passed in 1935]. So we had the regional director from California came down here to conduct the election. We won the first election because we had encountered the first election at Olaa. The regional director [of the National Labor Relations Board] in Hawai'i was Mr. Arnold [Leonard] Wills. Mr. Wills spent a lot of time at my home. He was my counselor. He taught me how to do it. The reason why I guess he want it is because it protects his job also. We get more unions, he get job security also. He didn't tell me that. But I know. So he told me how to do it.

We organized Olaa first. We went to Hilo Sugar [Company] next. We went to Pepe'ekeo [Sugar Company] next. We went to the rest of the plantations, the thirteen we had on the island. Went up in Kohala [Sugar Company]. We went down south to Hutchinson [Sugar Plantation Company] and Ka'u sugar [Hawaiian Agricultural Company]. We clean up the thirteen on this island first. Then with this success, the rest of the organizing team cleaned up Maui, O'ahu and Kaua'i. So the organizing started on the Big Island.

During the early period, we had an internal struggle within the union. The international representative that came from Sacramento were telling us that in selecting your leadership, there has to be multi-national, multi-racial. In other words, if you going to have a president of a Japanese race, you might have a vice president, a Portuguese, the secretary might be Filipino, or something. You have to have a multi breakdown. And that's the way we going to have election. Well, I was kind of a rebel. I said, "We cannot accept your dictates. We not going to go according to what you pointed out to us to do. We going let the membership determine as to who is going to be the president, who is going to be the secretary and so forth. We want democratic election. We don't want a pre-cut setup."

So we had an internal struggle in the union. At first we organized the workers in Hawai'i, Local 142, Big Island. We were unit three, Local 142 because Hutchinson [Sugar Plantation Company] was number one, and Ka'u sugar [Hawaiian Agricultural Company] number two, and Olaa [Sugar Company] was number three, and Hilo Sugar [Company] was number four. These were the unit was going. Because we had an inner struggle, the international said, "You going to cause too much trouble, we're going to give you separate local." Similar with Kohala [Sugar Company]. They gave us [Local 148]. And Kohala was [Local 147]. So we were not, you know, in one group. All the rest of the plantations was 142, and we were [148], and Kohala was [147]. So we had an inner struggle in the early period that we cannot follow the dictates of the international representative and we have to run the union democratically.

Well, this what happened in, we had a negotiation in 1945. We organized. The Little Wagner Act, I think, passed in '44 [permitting unions to organize agricultural workers]. We organized the rest of the sugar workers. We had a negotiation, first contract in 1945. We were still [148]. Because we were [148] and I was a representative of [148] I served in the sugar negotiating committee. And our demand was ten cents [more] an hour.

DT: And the bulk of your work in organizing was really done under federal rather than state law because Hawai'i didn't have the Little Wagner Act [until 1944], right?

YA: Right.

DT: And significant so far, you haven't even mentioned the name Jack Hall.

YA: Well, Jack Hall came a little later.

DT: A little later? In other words . . .

YA: He was not, he was not a labor leader.

DT: Basic [labor] organization of the entire state really had been established before Jack Hall?

YA: Right.

DT: This is not a well-known fact, is it?

YA: It's not a well-known fact and [Sanford] Zalburg, I don't think he mentioned that in his book [*A Spark is Struck!: Jack Hall and the ILWU in Hawaii*] either. And I think it's unfortunate. Jack Hall got a lot of credit for something I think it's overdone. Kawano is the one that organized the sugar workers in Hawai'i, not Jack Hall. [Zalburg, however, in the Prologue of his book, states, "It was not Hall who did the big organizing of the ILWU in 1944 that suddenly made the union the most powerful force in Hawai'i. That credit belongs to Frank Thompson, from Sacramento, and to a host of local people on all the islands. The locals started long before Hall began his life's work."]

DT: Yeah. Can you tell me a little bit about Jack Kawano? I know of him. I don't think I—we overlapped in point of time—but I never really got acquainted with him. Can you tell us a bit about Jack?

YA: Well, Jack Kawano is a very interesting person because he's not very verbal in his spoken English. He was born and raised in 'Opihikao in Puna, really in the boondocks. I guess, after he graduated eighth grade, he got a job at one of the [Hāmākua] Coast plantations and the family was extremely poor. So he left for Honolulu to look for a job. He did all kind of menial jobs and he end up in longshore group. Then this was subsequent to Harry [L.] Kamoku organizing the ILWU [Local] 136 in Hilo. They organize [Local] 137 in Honolulu. I think Jack Kawano had something to do in helping building the [Local] 137 ILWU longshore in Honolulu. During the war, there was a conference of many labor leaders including Art [Arthur] Rutledge. They said that they going to organize all the workers in Hawai'i during the war. Then they parceled out all the Teamsters, all truck drivers on the Big Island. They going to organize, all go to Teamsters. All the sugar workers go to the ILWU. They had a plan. Jack Kawano was one of the group they were trying to get together, organize all the workers in Hawai'i, and parcel it out to different international unions. It happened that Jack Kawano and his group came to Hawai'i to organize the sugar workers.

Jack Hall came, I think, was after all the sugar workers were organized. Jack Hall was a worker in the department of labor, the territory of Hawai'i. Jack Hall had contributed quite a lot during the early period of the organizing attempt in Kaua'i and in Honolulu. He came from the Mainland. He was one of the sailors. He was a very active person and a lot of time he was having his meals at [John E.] Reinecke's home and the Salvation Army. I guess he was locked up in jail many times for his activities. But I don't think he should take credit for sugar organization because he wasn't around. (DT Chuckles)

We were the one. Jack Kawano is the responsible person. Let me explain to you how Jack

[Kawano] worked. He also worked on building the Democratic party and he did a terrific job in it. Jack Hall was not a Democrat. Jack Hall was a person independently supported Republicans and supports Democrats. [Joseph R.] Farrington's support came from Jack Hall. [William H.] "Doc" Hill, Senator [Hiram L.] Fong, U.S. [Senator], [were] supported by Jack Hall.

In 1946 I was sent to California Labor School. We were taught American labor history, different "isms", different types of unions. When I say "isms," it means socialism, communism, capitalism, imperialism. So we got a background of different type of "ism" that existed in the society at the time. When I came back, I was elected PAC [Political Action Committee] chairman, '76. We struck the sugar plantation in 1946, September 1, for seventy-nine days. I was in Honolulu.

DT: You said something about '76 there, you meant '46, right?

YA: Oh, '46, yeah, 1946. Then I stayed most of the time during the strike at Pier 11, at my headquarters. Because I had California Labor School experience, while I was there, we had to attend night classes listening to progressive speakers. We were asked to visit the strike situation, look at the soup kitchen. So when I came home, I wrote, I drafted the strike strategy manual for the sugar workers in Hawai'i. The manual is still there. There is some amendments, some corrections there, some improvement, but the strike manual that I prepared is still there in the ILWU file.

DT: Now let's pause here just for a minute. Why all of these theoretical. . . . You people had organized sugar, much of the longshoremen, here locally, right?

YA: Right.

DT: And all of a sudden you had some theorists giving you special—why is that necessary? You'd done a great job so far. Didn't they think you knew how to conduct a strike or what? You went to the school in California, did that add anything appreciably to your knowledge or not?

YA: Well, every opportunity I had listening to lectures at the auditorium, going to school, learn the theory, and as I told you previously, my house is a library. Many of the books that I purchased and collected was recommended reading by the California Labor School.

DT: You were probably better educated than the people that were talking to you, right? To be perfectly frank. You'd read, you'd organized, you wrote that manual in a practical way . . .

YA: You know, when it come to negotiation at the sugar table with the employer counsel, I am versed about capitalism. I'm versed about many things that why they act the way they do. I made an in-depth study of the American system so I think I was quite capable to take them on head on.

DT: Yeah. Probably even more knowledgeable than the so-called managers themselves. We're going to have to change tapes. I'm sorry. (Chuckles)

END OF INTERVIEW

Tape Nos. 17-97-2-91, 17-98-2-91, and 17-99-2-91

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Yasuki Arakaki (YA)

April 17, 1991

Hilo, Hawai'i

BY: Michiko Kodama-Nishimoto (MK) and Daniel W. Tuttle, Jr. (DT)

Joy Chong: The following is an interview with Yasuki Arakaki, this is session number two. It took place in Hilo, at the county building, in his office, and this is videotape number five. The interviewers were Michiko Kodama-Nishimoto and Daniel Tuttle. The date of the interview is April 17, 1991. Videotape number five.

This is going to be tape number five, session two.

MK: This is an interview with Yasuki Arakaki on April 17, 1991, Hilo, Hawai'i. This is session number two, tape number five of the series. I guess we can start today by kind of backing up a little bit and continuing with our discussion of Jack Kawano.

YA: From the last time I got together with you, I tried to find out what actually happened from the time Jack Kawano came to our scene and the time he was removed from our scene. Jack Kawano, it could be said—he's not a very eloquent speaker. He went only to eighth grade. He's a person, the type that he doesn't normally do extraordinary reading. But he has a very influential power because he can speak to workers directly, individually, explaining his background and his experience and then he'll communicate with the workers down the line. I want to explain to you how he approached us when we first met.

We were informed that Mainland unions coming to organize the sugar workers. We knew. Waiākea Mill [Company] was already organized [by the American Federation of Labor]. When Jack Kawano appeared at Olaa, we had a secret meeting because, you know, we have to meet not in the plantation building because if we get caught, we going to get fired. So we secretly met at the Catholic Youth [Organization] gym. Right in the Olaa village. There were around forty, fifty people there. A very convincing speech that he made was something like this. He said. . . . He didn't mention ILWU [International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union] at all. He mentioned Congress of Industrial Organizations and he explained what he mean by Congress of Industrial Organizations. He said, "Congress of Industrial Organizations means the janitor, the office worker, the mechanics, the carpenters, everybody going be one union. One solid union top to the bottom. So when you have that kind of union, you going to get strength. Not like AFL [American Federation of Labor] where you have dividing into different trades like machinists is one union, carpenters another union. Let me explain." He said, "You know who hauls your sugar to the docks?"

Nobody answered, so he said, "Hawai'i Consolidated Railway. Those people belong to CIO. And do you know who load the sugar on the ship? They're the dock workers. They are CIO. And when they go to Crockett, California, they refine the sugar." He said, "The Longshoremen unload the sugar from the ship and they transport that to Crockett Refinery. And the warehouse workers in Crockett are CIO."

So, gee, man, this must be a real mighty union. We got to join this union. So we took a vote and they say we going to join the CIO. Kawano's explanation, we bought it lock, stock and barrel.

DT: What year was this? Do you remember what year this was?

YA: Nineteen forty-four, February. (Chuckles) I remember the date.

DT: Hey, it's important . . .

YA: Yeah, February 1944, you know. He made a very convincing talk. Everybody, you know, and they say Kawano say, "All those of you who want to join the CIO raise your hand." Everybody raised their hand. The next thing is, well, we have to have an organizing chairman from this group. Nomination is open.

Say, "Yasu, Yasu, you the one because you (chuckles) the president of the Surfrider Athletic Club. You going to be the chairman." I can't deny it so I took it. I stayed with them for twenty-one years.

And this is Jack Kawano's introduction. I'm going to give a little background of Kawano's, the ensuing years. I have here a pamphlet which was produced by the Olaa unit. It's a ten-year anniversary pamphlet. In this pamphlet if we will note all the people came to Olaa is here. Unfortunately, Jack Kawano's picture is omitted and the reason this happened is because ten years later what happened was Jack Kawano was cast aside by the union. They accused him as a collaborator with the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] investigating Communists in the ILWU. Unfortunately, what made Kawano become what he do, you know, serve against our union is because Jack Hall and [Harry] Bridges and [Louis] Goldblatt and others isolated him. They isolated him because he was not an eloquent speaker. He's not a good collective bargainer. He can hardly speak in making demands. He's not too verbal. So they didn't give him responsible positions, so in the end, he start moving away from the labor movement. He went to work with John [A.] Burns, building the Democratic party. So he concentrated most of his work, subsequent to his leaving the active operation in the union, with the Democratic party. This is where he land up and he was isolated. So, the communication between Jack Kawano and the ILWU hierarchy was broken. So you can see by this ten-year-later pamphlet his face is not on this page. I'm sorry it happened. When he died, I wrote a eulogy to the wife explaining my experience with the husband. She gave me a very short thank-you letter thanking me for at least letting her know that everybody never thought Jack Kawano was a collaborator with the FBI.

Unfortunately, it could happen to me. But probably I was little bit more vocal. I fought back. I was not loved by the top people in the union for many years. But later on we became friends. They accepted me as one of their leaders.

The first thing they did to me was sent me to California Labor School. One of the eleven selected in the territory of Hawai'i. Two from the Big Island. I was one of them. We left on the S.S. *Matsonia*. I worked as a scullion. We peel potato on a ship. After five days, I was in San Francisco. I stayed there. We landed in San Francisco in February 28. From there on, I stayed in San Francisco till June. I attended California Labor School for about three-and-a-half months. The rest of the time I was doing other kind of union work like going to peace conference in Chicago. I did some other work at the international. We became very close friend with Harry Bridges.

DT: What year was this?

YA: This was in ('44). Harry was given wrong information about my background and my philosophy. I guess Harry understood me. The first thing he asked me, "Yasu, when you go back, can you help me?"

I said, "What you want me to do?"

"I want you to organize in such a manner so that we have one big local. We have 136, 150, 152, 142, (147, 148), that's no good. We make into one big local. That way, when we negotiate a contract with the Big Five. . . . Big Five is only five. They control the banks, they control the docks, they control the sugar, they control the pineapple. So we tackling one big employer with one big union. So, by doing it, you can help the union."

So I spent many days, many nights going to Līhu'e . . .

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

MK: We're going to do a little overlap, okay? Yasu, we got to ask you to kind of back up a little bit. You were going . . .

YA: I said Līhu'e?

MK: Yeah. You remember where you were, yeah?

DT: As one big union.

MK: You're trying to conglomerate. . . . Make one local.

DT: One big union. Because that's what Bridges wanted.

YA: I went to Līhu'e, as I mentioned previously. And I also went to Maunaloa, Moloka'i; to HC&S [Hawaiian Commercial & Sugar Company] in Maui; Lahaina [Pioneer Mill Company]; O'ahu Sugar [Company]; practically all the plantations, to talk to them that the best thing for us to do is to unify into one big local and eliminate the longshore local, eliminate the pineapple local, eliminate the sugar local, but one big local. And because we're the biggest membership, they acceded to Local 142. (Chuckles) And 142 happened to be the sugar local. So everybody joined into one big union. My convincing talk was if you have one president, one vice president, one secretary-treasurer, you have three guys on the payroll. If you get ten locals, you get ten times three, you know, that's thirty officers. You going to get too much

expenditure for salary. This was quite convincing. So we consolidated the union into one big local.

DT: By 1946 Jack Kawano had sort of been pushed aside a little bit or was he still very active with you?

YA: Nineteen forty-six, no, he was still active. He was completely isolated, 1949 longshore strike.

DT: His isolation came later?

YA: Yeah, right.

DT: You were co-existing in leadership with Jack Kawano?

YA: Right, right.

DT: Where was Jack Hall at this time?

YA: Well, Jack Hall minded his work on other areas, other than sugar because sugar we had more militant leadership within the ranks. Like [Hideo] "Major" Okada, Castner Ogawa, [Takumi "Taku"] Akama from Kaua'i, and a lot of people throughout the territory. We had good leadership so we didn't depend too much on his [Hall's] assistance.

DT: So your lines were really directly with Bridges?

YA: My personal contact was Bridges because I didn't have too much close connection with Goldblatt and Jack Hall.

MK: You mentioned earlier off tape that there was a certain anti-Japanese leadership strain in the ILWU, can you kind of elaborate on that?

YA: Well, this began from Mainland—international representative was sent from the Mainland down here. Because if you look at the Hawai'i labor history, the strike conducted by the Japanese in 1920 were racial. In 1924 strike, again was racial. First one was Japanese strike, the second was a Filipino strike. So looking at the history of the Hawai'i labor movement, the international decided that when we organize people, we should organize all nationality in one union. Don't segregate them. In doing so, try to distribute your command position. You know, the leadership of the different ethnic groups. This is the general instruction. When the international representative came here, they specifically said if this [officer] is going to be a Japanese, the next one is going to be a Filipino. They named 'em what, you know, layer going to be what. Well, we couldn't accept that kind of direction so we had trouble from the very beginning. So when this happened, Frank Thompson from Sacramento said, "Yasu, you and Kohala unit, we going to separate you from [Local] 142." They gave Kohala [Local] 147. They gave me [Local] 148. We were separate local of our own. We had our own office. We had our own treasury. Some of the problems that we are facing was, we had to send per capita tax to the Mainland from the dues. We were collecting one dollar dues. They wanted all the dollar. Nothing left for the unit. So we asked them, we want a breakdown of what you guys going to use with the money, with the one dollar. Oh, they were angry, "You guys get no goddamned business asking that kind of question." (Chuckles)

DT: You didn't like this. You didn't like these people from across the ocean giving you orders on what you should do and the number of your locals. But you went along with it, didn't you?

YA: Yeah. I went along with it but . . .

DT: You didn't like it.

YA: I didn't like it. Definitely.

DT: So you bided your time?

YA: Right.

DT: I see. Okay.

YA: This is not only me. It's many others. There was a meeting in Honolulu of the Japanese leaders. Most of these was sugar. There was some pineapple people there, too. Jack Hall accused that there was a conspiracy against the rest of the nationality by this top Japanese group. I don't remember the names exactly but it's documented in some of the books. This is the kind of misconception of racial problems we had in the early period of the union. By chance, lucky they pick me to go to California Labor School. I had a very lengthy talk with Harry [Bridges]. Harry convinced me that I'm not an outsider. I'm one of them. By doing it, I think I was able to help bring about the mass consolidation. If this didn't come to pass, I don't think we still have one single local. No way.

MK: I was wondering with the leadership being Japanese, how much of a oneness, the feeling of oneness did all the different racial groups have in the union in those early days? Did the Filipinos, the Japanese, the Portuguese all come together in the union? Did they have that feeling or was it something imposed?

YA: Well, you know, the interesting thing, the question was asked to me by Dr. Ed[ward D.] Beechert when I addressed the University [of Hawai'i] on a history class, to students what was the environment, what was the condition of the workers in the plantation that abruptly, in four months, over 20,000 sugar workers in Hawai'i got in the union. Why? That was the question. That is the kind of answer you want to know. Well, I think you understand—which I explained previously—how we grew up in the plantation, we suffered. We were mistreated. We were the peons. Then the lord was the White man. Everybody else was the peon. Maybe the Portuguese had little bit better break. They are White. They were the *lunas*. But the Filipinos, and the Japanese, and the Koreans, and the Chinese, and all the rest, we are the peons. So we had no other alternative but to ban together and form one big union and take the bosses on. We decided just that. Most of us who led the group, we are educated. We are high school graduates. We studied the American democracy, what is fairness. This group led the organization. I think we were quite successful in molding the Hawai'i labor movement into one of the strongest in the ILWU.

DT: You were interested in American democracy and you had a common bond perhaps led by AJAs [Americans of Japanese Ancestry] but a common bond among all ethnic extractions, when you got back to the California Labor School, you were given a different menu, were you not? Than what you believed in here working with your people in Hawai'i.

YA: California Labor School was an eye-opener for me. Prior to going to school, I was a rabid reader. I like to read. Because of that, I studied what's happening in China. I studied what happened in Europe, South America, and all over the country to find out more or less what different "isms" are being practiced and what are their success and failures. The one thing that really hit me when I went to California Labor School, they taught us imperialism, capitalism. They taught us socialism, communism and, of course, naturally the American labor history. With this kind of background, we find out that different countries have different "ism" and different practices and some is applicable. I was telling the other day to a person, I believe that workmen's [workers'] comp [compensation], unemployment comp [compensation], and social security, is socialism. If someone want to deny my opinion, well they can have it. This is ultimately communism. If we didn't have these three items which I mentioned to you, we'll have a revolution in America. Because the great mass of the workers cannot just survive on their daily wages. Someday they going get accident, they got to get paid. These are some of the things that we got to understand, that we have in our capitalist system embedded with some socialist ideas. I learned this in California Labor School.

DT: Wouldn't you say, or is it fair to say, that the way you viewed things then and perhaps even today, you viewed them in a very practical sense. In other words, what you're up against on a day-to-day basis, people-to-people basis, rather than based upon these "isms" and theories which are spun by ivory tower college professors—if you want to put it that way, right?

YA: Right.

DT: In other words, your thinking was very pragmatic.

YA: Well, anything that is applicable to help the mass of workers who went through the suffering that my parents went through to adjudicate some of the sufferings . . .

DT: You didn't care whether it was [Thomas] Jefferson or Karl Marx or . . .

YA: Right, right.

DT: . . . [Leon] Trotsky or whatnot?

YA: Right.

DT: You wanted to help the rank and file of the people that you knew and loved and lived with, families, that sort of thing.

YA: So the [sugar] industry people in Hawai'i accuse me—because I'm a California Labor School graduate—that I'm a Communist. They also accused me Communist because I refused to accept a managerial position [with Olaa Sugar Company] because if you do, you got to quit the union. I refused to take the promotion. So the guy must be a Communist. Those are all documented in the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigations] file. I was one of the guys who was subpoenaed in 1950 as a "Reluctant 39" in the federal court, by the FBI and then the House Un-American Activities Committee. [The House Committee on Un-American Activities came to Hawai'i in April 1950 to investigate communism in Hawai'i. The "Reluctant 39," comprised of labor leaders such as Jack Hall and Yasuki Arakaki, were subpoenaed and took the Fifth Amendment when asked the question, "Are you now or have you ever been a

member of the Communist party?"]

DT: You stood accused of this even though you didn't necessarily agree with some of these things, right?

YA: Well, I agree that socialistic idea they have on the three stuff I mention [i.e., worker's compensation, unemployment compensation, and social security], I agree . . .

DT: Well, that was FDR [President Franklin Delano Roosevelt] . . .

YA: . . . those are socialist . . .

DT: . . . that was FDR that was . . .

YA: No, but that's socialistic.

DT: . . . that was the Democratic party.

YA: But that's socialistic.

DT: I won't argue with you about that.

(Laughter)

DT: Of course it was. But this was one of the necessary things that in the United States with its capitalistic, imperialistic system, if you want to call it that.

YA: Right.

DT: But FDR, one of the compromises that he had to make as a practical, pragmatic politician, huh?

YA: Right.

DT: Okay.

MK: You know, when you were part of the "Reluctant 39," how did you feel about it? How did the general community react to that and what were you advised to do?

YA: Well, you know, the FBI, the two agents came to see me, the same agent that went to talk to David Thompson. The interesting happen is he approached three families before he came to my house. I got a call from these three families saying that the FBI agents are in their home, they want to ask questions about Yasu Arakaki. So when those two showed up on my porch, I said, "It's about time. Why did you go intimidate my friends? Why didn't you come directly to my home to ask who am I and everything?" They were kind of apologetic but I took the offensive before they even get a chance to ask me questions.

So, before long, he told me, "Mr. Arakaki, we not after you."

I said, "Who are you after?"

"Jack Hall."

"Why Jack Hall?"

"Oh, I wanted to have you testify that a certain meeting that you attended with certain number of people there, that that was a Communist party meeting."

I say, "What's the purpose for? To lock up Jack Hall, or try to destroy this union? Jack Hall is the regional director. You going lock him up, you going to weaken the union."

Everything what they said, I nailed them. I brought the book out. I said, "Have you read this book?" They took the book from my hand. (*The Federal Bureau of Investigation*, by Max Lowenthal.)

They said, "No." They told me, "Can I borrow this?"

I said, "I'm sorry. You can get it in the library because I don't think you going return this book. But let me tell you something," I said, "When I read this book, your original founder, J. Edgar Hoover, from the time until you two guys come in here, there was not one incident or record in history that you people came to rescue the working man. You always side with the bosses, with the employers. And at this late date, you conning me to tell me that you are not locking me up because you want to lock Jack Hall up, forget it. You are here to bust this union."

Not too long after that, these two agents were caught. Robert McElrath tape-recorded these two agents at Dave Thompson's house. The recording was played over the radio station because we had a radio contract every Sunday ["Voice of the ILWU"]. We blasted everything they converse about the collusion. They're trying to say that Thompson, we not after you. The same kind of crap they were throwing to me, they were throwing to Thompson. This is the kind of stuff I went through. You know, Communist investigation. To me, I think it was done a great injustice because my name was in the paper every day in Hawai'i in the *Hilo Tribune-Herald*, in the editorial. They blasted me that I'm a Communist, okay?

Judge [Martin] Pence, he's the only *Haole* guy he had guts enough to run as a Democrat from the late [19]30s. So we work hard for him secretly. We got him elected for [Hawai'i] County attorney. Later on, we had a president, Democrat. They appointed a Democratic governor. The Democratic governor appoints a Democratic judge. So he [Pence] was appointed to the circuit bench. Today he's in the federal court. The same man, one day he called me in his office—private office—he say, "Yasu, I going ask you a favor."

I say, "What kind of favor?"

"Because you refuse to say that you are not a Communist, you using the Fifth Amendment, I want to ask you to resign from the [Democratic] party."

I say, "Judge, aren't you ashamed of telling me this things? You know that I'm not a Communist. And furthermore, if it wasn't for one guy like me, you wouldn't have been judge

today." He got stuck. I slam the door and I went out. That's the same Judge Pence sitting in the federal bench today in Hawai'i. That's the kind of treatment I got in the early period in Hawai'i.

DT: Since you discovered a lot of people who had feet of clay, as the saying will go, didn't you feel terribly lonely at this time? Who could you trust given the tensions of the time? Who could you trust?

MK: We have to stop here.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

JC: This is a continuation of the Yasuki Arakaki interview. This is videotape number six.

MK: Interview with Yasuki Arakaki, tape number six, and Dan, you're next.

DT: All I can do, I think at this stage, is simply repeat the question at the end of the last tape. These were really tumultuous times. You must have felt, who can I trust? Who could you trust looking back on it?

YA: Well, interesting thing as I was mention previously. I had a backing of the rank and file on this island. They knew that the employer offered to buy me. I refused to sell. I think the membership recognized that I'm not ready to be sold yet. With the kind of leadership I gave, they gave me the kind of support that I needed, even though the paper and the radio blasted me, day in and out, you know. My strongest consolation I had, my wife supported me, 100 percent. She never doubted. When you have a good wife like that, you keep on punching until you win the war. This is what I did.

DT: You said you went to a peace conference after you went to labor school. You learned all about the "isms," you didn't necessarily buy it. Back here in Hawai'i you were darn sure you weren't going to go back on your friends, the working people that you were associated with, so you just kept on punching along. What happened back at that so-called peace conference at that time . . .

YA: Well, you know, I think all of you know that the creation of the United Nations, they gave birth in San Francisco [in 1945, at the United Nations Conference on International Organization]. Prior to the birth of the United Nations at San Francisco, we had people from all over the world convene at Chicago. I had the dubious honor of representing the West Coast Longshoremen, West Coast ILWU, to be present at this gathering. And, you know Harry Bridges is very vocal. He fought for peace. By doing, he got locked up when he spoke against the Korean War, you remember? He said, "Let the United Nations take over the problem and let's not send the American troops to get killed or kill the Koreans." You know where I come from. I come from the ILWU who very vocally want international peace. And I was very fortunate to represent our union to that peace conference.

And that's not the only conference that I was asked to attend. Couple years later, I think in the year 1958, we had a meeting in San Francisco of all maritime unions. The [CIO] Marine Cooks and Stewards [Union], the engineers, the masters, mates and pilots. You can name them all they are, you know, seaman's union were gathered. They were discussing about the problem they having after the war. Most of their ships are moth balled because there is no business from Asian continent. What we found out was [the cargo on] all the ships coming to western shores were loaded on foreign ships, non-union ships. They unloaded the cargo in Vancouver, B.C. [British Columbia]. Then they load the ship at Vancouver and take it to Shanghai and Chinese ports. They load the cargo in China and bring back in Vancouver, B.C. again. Then they put it on a truck across the state of Washington and come to the United States. In the meantime, the seamens were idle, they have no job. Longshoremen didn't have a job either.

So a seven-man delegation were selected from the convention and I was one of the persons selected. The reason why they did this was because I was one of the persons that was reading the Chinese success and failures of their different five-year plan. From the year 1951, I receive a English edition of the *China Reconstruct*, a periodical written by Israel Epstein from New York. He was the editor. He was in Shanghai. What Israel did was to report to the world what's happening in China. So he gives their plan, their experiment, the success and failures. I knew China from 1951 on. My trip was in 1958. So I was the most knowledgeable person of the seven-man delegation going to Washington. So we met (at) Jack Burns' headquarters—Delegate [to Congress] Burns' headquarters—as the central office, because I'm the only one can convince to get one office space in that seven-man group and Jack was my delegate there. I helped him get elected. So he made connections for me to people, senators, representative from state of Washington, Oregon, California. He also made arrangement for us to meet with people in the [Dwight D.] Eisenhower administration, [Secretary of State] John Foster Dulles, and all these China experts they have in his division, under his [Dulles'] command. We met with all these people. And I don't know, for some reason, the underlings were all in favor except John Foster Dulles. John made some comment prior to our convening, I guess, that he didn't want to support China because they're afraid that they going to move from China to the southern islands into the archipelagos. They were afraid that if China become strong, they going to conquer Thailand, Singapore and all those places. So he's not going to help China at all. So he the bottleneck. This was in 1958. In 1972, that's when [Richard M.] Nixon went to China to open up an understanding. At that time, they advocated that one China, not two Chinas. Nineteen seventy-four, 1974 I went to China. (Again in 1978), I went to China. This area I will explain later because I will try to finish up my area on my activities with the [Democratic] party. I think I should cover that first.

My activities in the party, as I mentioned to you about Jack Burns, started from. . . . With Jack Burns I started from (the year) 1948. I joined the party in 1937. In 1937 when I joined the party, all of us, it was a secret party because if the boss find out that we are in the Democratic party, we won't get job in the plantation. But we was secretly campaigning for people like Edwin De Silva, Martin Pence—this was before the union (was organized). So we began our organizational Democratic party prior to the union. When the union came in '44, well, we have a union to protect so it really grew. In 1946 when I came back from California Labor School, I was elected the PAC [Political Action Committee] chairman for that first [ILWU] PAC committee we organized in Honolulu. Our headquarters was Pier 11. Then Mr. [Marshall] McEuen was my director. I believe on the 1946 election we had elected thirty-five people that we had endorsed. [Twenty of the thirty-five candidates endorsed by the PAC were

elected.] I think we accomplished a big advancement in that early period in 1946. Then we start building the Democratic party. In 1948, I think we ran Governor Burns [against incumbent Joseph R. Farrington] to become delegate to [Congress], to Washington. We lost. At that time there was some Communist hysteria because John Reinecke [and his wife, Aiko] was fired from school. [Public schoolteachers, the Reineckes were dismissed for allegedly violating a law which held that it was unlawful for a public schoolteacher to be a member of the Communist party. In 1976, the decision was reversed by the state board of education.] The House Un-American Activities Committee were investigating Hawai'i. This came in the [19]50s. So we had a split within the community. I think if you were to study the history, the [Honolulu] *Star-Bulletin* were quite favorable with us during this period. [Honolulu] *Advertiser* were against us. So in order to correct the situation, we didn't support all Democrats. I was all insisting on Democrats but they had people like Jack Hall who had a little bit more experience in that area say, "I think we got to support maybe [Joseph R.] Farrington [for delegate to Congress] to show that we are not a one-party group." This began in [1946]. Then when we lost Jack Burns' [attempt to defeat Farrington] in '48, we started to change our position and start consolidating the union. Consolidate the Democratic party in more unison. We accomplished by getting Jack Burns elected to Washington and he served there two terms [1956 to 1959].

While I was in Washington, he was able to get statehood for Hawai'i. Then when I was in his office, he told me, "Yasu, Hawai'i is not going to get the forty-ninth state."

I said, "Why?"

"Because we don't have enough vote in Congress. If we [try to become] the forty-[ninth state], the people was going to fight against us. If we take the fifty, they'll give us the fifty." So he withdrew the resolution and allowed the Alaskan statehood to get in. It's a Republican state. So Democratic state will come on the fiftieth. And lo and behold, [the] Japanese [news]paper, *Japan Times* said in Japanese article, "Delegate Burns, you get a lot of foresight. Because in Japanese, forty-nine means *shijuku*. *Shiju* means "constant." *Ku* means "suffer." So Delegate Burns gave the most suffering state to Alaska and Hawai'i got fiftieth state, we have no suffering in it. So we have to congratulate Delegate Burns."

Then I asked the delegate, I said, "Jack, what office do you want to run? You want to run for governor [of Hawai'i] or do you want to run for the [U.S.] Senate?"

"Well, you know Yasu, I don't make the decision when it come to my nomination. You go back to Hawai'i and check with those Democrats and find out what office you want I run and I do whatever they tell me to do."

I came back. I talked to the Democratic leaders and they said, "No. Jack going to run for governor, not for the [U.S.] Senate." He did that. He stayed home. Governor [William F.] Quinn got elected, [defeating Burns for governor in 1959]. He [Quinn] was [Hawai'i's] first [elected] governor. I think most of us was sleeping at that time. We were only mouth instead of really supporting Governor Burns—I mean, Jack Burns to become the governor. We didn't work hard enough.

And another thing that I going to tell you some mishap happen, but I think we got to blame the governor [i.e., Burns], too. While we were having this campaign going on, he [Burns]

was in Africa. I don't know why he was in Africa but he was representing some . . .

DT: That was Botswana, wasn't it? It's the antipode of Hawai'i (YA chuckles). You know, it's exactly one-half way around the world from us.

YA: Well, whatever, you know . . .

DT: He was there for a little ceremony.

YA: He should've stayed in Hawai'i to campaign instead of go Botswana, okay. (DT chuckles.) So he stayed home but we worked very hard to defeat Quinn [in 1962]. We rebuilt the Democratic party again and we got him [for] three terms [1962-74]. So Hawai'i became a Democratic state and thanks to Governor Burns and all the front line soldiers that he developed.

DT: Before we get too far into the political side, I'd like to have a couple of questions I'd like to backtrack and ask you. Once again, I think you're an acute observer and you were a reader, an avid reader, you had a good head on your shoulder. You weren't selling your soul to anybody who came in with the latest "ism" or anything of that sort. Did you ever have any pause for thought back in 1946 when both the Soviet Union and the USA [United States of America] insisted upon the veto power in the security council of the United Nations? Wasn't that rather disillusioning to you?

YA: Well, it was but I have no influence in that top level. I'm really a small guy on the bottom so I took that with a grain of salt at that time.

DT: I ask that because later you were brought into context with John Foster Dulles.

YA: Right.

DT: Who was—I don't think you phrased it this way—but he was a rather inflexible personality, was he not?

YA: Very rigid. Very rigid. You can't change that man's mind.

DT: You had very grave reservations about his attitude really toward, say, the foreign policy of the United States.

YA: Right. He was a vivid anti-Soviet Union. Anything that get some semblance of socialism or communism, he emphatically were against, you know, and he said that.

DT: At that time if you had any concern for the Soviet Union it was not as a nation, I suspect. But you had a lot of empathy for many of their citizens who were either really with or without a labor union and suffering a lot, right? Is that your tag of the Soviet Union or was it something . . .

YA: Well, you know, I studied the [Friedrich] Engels and [Karl] Marx basic theory. I studied Leon Trotsky [and Joseph] Stalin and many of the inner struggles of the people in the Soviet Union. I kept up with what's happening in Soviet Union very closely. I find they made a lot

of mistakes. I hate to tell you this but it's unwinding under [Mikhail S.] Gorbachev now and they could have corrected that. China is doing the same thing. I think they're going to face the same difficulty.

DT: You have had reason to question the Soviet Union over the years, their leadership.

YA: Right.

DT: Even as you had reason to question the leadership of the United States . . .

YA: Right.

DT: . . . I think we all do it part and parcel . . .

YA: Definitely.

DT: I think that's rather important because so many of these things today we look back upon them from 1990 and it seems almost like it was an unbelievable world at that time, right?

YA: Right.

DT: I have another question. It's sort of not in the direct line with that at all. As you had contact with West Coast leadership, did you ever run into a fellow named Eric Hoffer.

YA: No, I did not.

DT: He wrote the little book *The True Believer*?

YA: No, I did not.

DT: He was a longshoremen, he was a bit of a Jack Kawano in his way. A very uneducated longshoremen . . .

YA: No, I did not.

DT: . . . who later became a celebrated philosopher at Claremont [Graduate] School down in Southern California. I'm just curious as to whether your paths had ever crossed because in so many ways your personal concerns seems to have coincided. He was growing up on the West Coast and you grew up here in Hawai'i.

YA: You know, probably I don't know if I mentioned under my first talk or not but when I was a young eighteen-years-old boy, on my graduation thesis in Japanese school, I wrote a paper "Monroe Doctrine Versus [Greater East] Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere." The subject matter, one eighteen-years-old wouldn't understand. I wrote a paper. How I wrote the paper is because I studied American history, Western history. I studied the doctrine advocated by President Monroe. Point blankly he said to the Europeans and Asians, "Hands off Central and South America, that's my domain. Don't poke your nose in."

Japan—when I was a high school senior—did the same thing. They said to the western world,

"Stay out of Asia. That's not your property, that's mine." [Greater East] Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, Japan move into Manchuria. They set up the Pu-yi government. I was an eighteen-years-old boy. I was an historian. Young punk historian of eighteen years. This was my interest in the world. I did it, I was kind of young. When I wrote that paper, the minister who was a Ph.D. [in] philosophy—he was also the principal of the school—he looked at me sharp and he said, "Yasu, will you destroy this paper?"

I said, "Why?"

"You going to put me in trouble because you are highly critical of the American government for the advocacy. You not only criticizing Japan, but you criticizing your own country. You going put me in trouble." So I wrapped that paper in my hand and I threw it in the waste basket. That was the end of it.

DT: But they didn't change your thought processes? (Chuckles)

YA: I can still write that thesis in Japanese if I were to go in the dictionary looking right there, I can write it because I know what I wrote in it. I researched. That was eighteen-years-old kid, you know. That was kind of young.

DT: In other words, at eighteen, you had discovered that the big countries, like big boys, could easily become bullies?

YA: Right. Right.

DT: To put it in common language. Okay. Let's go back to the political now. You'd started on that. Anything else you really want to talk about unions, Michiko?

MK: Can I move back a little bit to the union period? I know that we talked about Jack Hall but I was wondering if you had anything to say about [Arnold Leonard] Wills of the National Labor Relations Board?

YA: I think we shouldn't forget that man because Mr. Arnold Wills is a New Zealander. He have a little accent. He was assigned by the National Labor Relations Board [NLRB], Western Region, to come to Hawai'i and take care of the union organization problems and all kind. Mr. Wills, he wasn't [staying] in a hotel, he was [staying] in the Arakaki's hotel. I didn't have any children then yet. So he slept in one of my beds. He taught me the rights of labor on the National Labor Relations Act, Article VII. If you were to check that law, Article VII says, "the right to organize." The bosses cannot interfere you. He gave me that bible. He taught me how it's going to be done. He said, "Yasu, I not supposed to be educating you, giving you all this information, I supposed to be neutral. But first of all, we have to determine the bargaining unit, who can belong to the bargaining unit or not. So I'm going to send somebody from San Francisco to come down and conduct a hearing and they going to do it in Olaa [Sugar Company] first. They going to determine who's going to be in the union. Once we determine, you get the people to join the union, then we go through a process of voting in a ballot. The ballot box. You going for or against the union. The NLRB people will conduct the election."

And he was a very creative guy. He set the date, "Olaa going to be on Friday." Then he told

us to go and sign up the neighboring plantation, Hilo Sugar [Company]. Up Kaiwiki, Kaūmana, all the plantation (camps)—sign them up. “We going to have election at Hilo Sugar [Company] on Saturday. Sunday paper we going to announce the result of these two plantations. Monday we going to Pāpa‘ikou [i.e., Onomea Sugar Company]. In the meantime, you get your forces to organize. Sign them up ahead, ahead, ahead, so that when the election come, they get the people.” He told us, “If you go to the [independent] sugar planters [i.e., cultivators] that working the plantation also, tell them ‘We didn’t come here to tell you to join the union. We came here to tell you to vote yes on the ballot. And later on you find out all the people wants the union, at that time you can decide to join it because you are a cane planter so you get dual interest in the union. You are a worker and you are a planter so you might get dual interests. At that time, you might join the union. But today, I didn’t come over for sign up. Tomorrow when you go to the box, vote yes.’” We did this all throughout the island. We won thirteen plantations. We get the result. We put them in the press. Advertise on Maui, O‘ahu, Kaua‘i, clean everything up. In four months, we clean up Hawai‘i. It began in Olaa. My teacher was Arnold Wills.

DT: In other words, it was. . . . You’re talking about the period ’43–’44?

YA: This was ’44, yeah.

DT: You were really talking about a representative who had been appointed by the Democratic administration in Washington . . .

YA: Right.

DT: . . . who was giving you the best instruction he knew how to tell you how you could play your cards . . .

YA: Right.

DT: . . . vis-a-vis the law as it existed at that time.

YA: Long before Jack Hall came in the picture. Jack Hall get a lot of credit for a lot of things. It wasn’t Jack Hall that gave us the spark. The book [*A Spark is Struck!: Jack Hall & the ILWU in Hawai‘i*] says the spark was Jack Hall. It wasn’t him. It was Arnold Wills gave us the spark.

DT: Who might be in history just remembered as another bureaucrat.

YA: Right, right.

DT: Obviously, he had some concern about the social implications of what the administration in Washington was trying to accomplish.

YA: To be honest with you, I think he’s a socialist from New Zealand. He’s pro-labor.

DT: Yeah, well . . .

YA: And I figured that if he don’t have no more union, he no more job, yeah?

DT: Nevertheless, whatever the background . . .

YA: Right.

DT: . . . whatever "ism" you call it . . .

YA: Right.

DT: . . . he was willing to be helpful to you . . .

YA: Oh, yeah, yeah.

DT: . . . with his know-how. So you in essence are saying, here is an unsung hero of the Hawai'i labor movement.

YA: It's not only unsung. One of the FBI person asked me when he came to my house, he said, "Mr. Arakaki, we heard that Mr. Arnold Wills was in that meeting, too. Is that true?" I refused to answer the question because why should I be accomplice to your question. They asked me if he was in that particular Communist party meeting. These two FBI agents ask me that. You know, I not going say he was or not. I wasn't in that meeting in the first place so I don't know who was. I cannot tell the FBI who they were. The meeting that he said I was, I wasn't there.

MK: Another question I have is that you come from that generation of labor leaders, like [Hideo] "Major" Okada, Tom [Thomas S.] Yagi. When you look at your cohorts, do you see commonalities? What made you folks become the leaders of the union back in those days?

YA: Well, each individual have their background experience in the union. Tommy Yagi came a little later. He was not the original organizer. [Shigeo] Takemoto from Maui was the original leader. I think got too much pressure on Takemoto, I think. He couldn't continue, but Tom was asked to take over the job and Tom did a really good job. He is one of my classmates, California Labor School. We went to school together. Webb Ideue came from Moloka'i. He was one of the students.

Goro Hokama, how I met that guy, (chuckles) was in the pineapple field. Nineteen forty-seven [ILWU pineapple industry strike], lockout. I was asked to come to Honolulu to help the pineapple lockout. Then many of the workers in Honolulu in the canneries were having difficult time because a lot of the people were crossing the picket line. We found that there were two strong plantations, one in Kaua'i and one in Lāna'i. Was in the field, holding fast. We had the eleven-day strike. Then Harry Bridges came down special and told us this is a lockout, it's not a strike. We have a very weak front line so we have to send our workers back to work. They were angry. But they had to take Harry's word because Harry is the most experienced guy in the ILWU. I was heading to the airport then one guy call me and said, "Hey, Harry want to see you."

When I (saw) Harry, Harry said, "I want you to fly to Lāna'i."

"What for?"

"I want you send those guys back to work because the Hokama brothers are very stubborn."

MK: Maybe we can pick it up from there.

END OF SIDE TWO

TAPE NO. 17-98-2-91; SIDE ONE

JC: The following is an interview with Yasuki Arakaki. This is a continuation of session number two. This is videotape number seven.

MK: This is an interview with Yasuki Arakaki, tape number seven, and we were just talking about the situation with the Hokamas on Lāna'i and your role.

YA: When I flew into Lāna'i, it was a chartered flight. I was the only one on the plane. I didn't know that on the return flight, on that particular plane, there were policemen from the Big Island. They must have heard that a strike or the lockout is ended so they were told to leave Lāna'i and come back to the Big Island. On the return trip, I was on the same plane with them. Prior to my getting on the plane, I instructed all the union leaders to stay in their own office and I will handle the membership myself, alone. The reason is, I don't think the leaders in Lāna'i can convince them to go back to work. The reason I feel is because they convince them to stay out against the wishes of the international union, and all of a sudden they going change their mind and tell them go back to work, this is going to be nonsense. So first thing I did was I called all the Japanese-speaking people together. I spoke with them in Japanese. The Japanese historically, in the samurai days, if you would study the *Forty-[seven] Ronin*, if your master is murdered, you don't go and make a counter-attack at that time if you are not prepared. You wait for few days, few years, and build up your forces and then you annihilate the enemy. I think you people know what I mean. *Forty-[seven] Ronin* as a history in Japanese samurai days.

So to present that example to the Japanese group was not too difficult: to take two steps forward, you take one step back. You need the one step back. The next step you going forward. "Understand?"

"*Wakarimashita.*" Everybody say understood.

I translated that on the second meeting among the Filipinos. I explained to them something similar in the example, I convinced them. The one I had little problem was the English-speaking group because they were a little vocal. But we were able to convince them also. Not with unanimous vote but we convinced them. Then I went to the office room and I said, "Well, thank you for allowing me to present my talk to the membership. The membership will go back work tomorrow." Then I left Lāna'i.

When I came back from California Labor School, I visited many of the soup kitchens, their picket line, their organizations and all what they had in the Bay Area. I note it down. So when we came back, we struck in September 1, 1946, for seventy-nine days thereafter. Somebody have to write the strike manual, so I outline the strike manual, the strike strategy

committee, who composing in the committee, what are the committee representation in the strike strategy committee, like the picket committee, the bumming team, the account (committee), and the police (committee), public relations (committee). There's many areas that you need in the structure of organizations on strike. So I outlined, I wrote that paper. And we used that as a standard for all the strikers in Hawai'i in 1946 sugar strike. That became the model. There was few changes. Recently I saw that strike strategy manual. There are a few changes, but the majority of them was my authorship. It worked.

MK: How much of your planning or organizing of strikes is based on local practices versus Mainland practices? Like did you base it on *kumiais*, or the way Hawaiians work together, or how did you figure out your organization?

YA: That's a very interesting question you ask because, one thing about most of us who live in Hawai'i got to understand, you as an Oriental, you like to taste Filipino food and vice versa. So what we did was we tell the soup kitchen crew we don't want monotony. We want variation. How we going to do it? Well, you organize so that you have certain Filipino group feed certain day Filipino food. Certain day you put Japanese food. Certain day you put Hawaiian food. So people know they rotate certain days, certain kind of meal. We prepare the ingredients. We let them have it. If a Japanese, you get turnip, right? *Daikon*. They make pickle out of that, right? Cucumber. Make pickle. So the people don't normally eat pickle going be waiting for that day for have that pickle. So we had a grand time, picnic every day, a variety of food and bringing this ethnic specialty together. This is the way we did it. Then we said any surplus for the day, we have a list of people who have eight children, ten children, you bring big pot with you when you come to the soup kitchen because you going to clean up that dishes and the pot after you go home—after everything is done. The reason is we were feeding everybody lunch and supper only. So this large family can take that and feed the kids in the morning. This is the way we were distributing the food and every day was a picnic.

MK: How did you procure the food, like I've heard something about you had hunters, you had fishermen, you had farmers.

YA: Well, we were lucky on the Big Island especially. We had Mauna Kea, Mauna Loa, we get lot of goats running. A lot of wild sheep running. Wild pig running. So we get permission from the government, the department of agriculture, and get permission to go [hunting]. Then we go to a lot of ranchers that we can make friends with. We hunt pigs in their place. Then we bought a boat, at Olaa we bought a boat. We get fishermen crew go out every day fishing. Minimum they catch about 300 pound of that red fish and then *uhu* and all kind. We had three [soup] kitchens in our area, Mountain View, Kea'au and Pāhoa. So today the 300-pound fish go to let's say Kea'au, the following catch goes to Mountain View and we rotate. So they know what's coming in. For example, let's say a chicken farmer ask us for some muscle. We send half a dozen people to help the chicken farmers. That farmer will give us old hen, cracked eggs. So we had cracked eggs and old hens coming. We send certain group to a farmer that raise vegetables. There is such thing as M.Q.—marketable quality. But it's not saleable. The one-grade below stuff. They gave us all that, truckload of that. Then we bring that to the soup kitchen and we distribute to the kitchens. So we had ample vegetables, ample fish, and animals, and everything.

Then there was one guy asked us to take care a pond, a nice pond. There was a pond in

Kapoho. We sent our guys, the divers in to scrape all that *limu* out and clean the place up. He gave us two *pipi* on a hoof, alive. Then, his place caught on fire. We sent our crew to quench the fire. So he gave us two more on the hoof. This the way we were giving service to the public and they was giving us in kind.

Furthermore, 1958 sugar strike, four months, we had \$26,000 in our treasury. I went to one big wholesaler. I said, "Mr. Hara, I'm going to give you ten grand [\$10,000]. I want you to buy rice, sanitary napkin, toothbrush, toothpaste, all the basic things the family need. I want you to stock for us. We going to draw on wholesale. If in case the strike is over and if you don't use the ten grand, we will lend you that ten grand without interest for another year. Fair enough?"

He said, "Oh, beautiful."

So when the strike was over, I went to him. He checked how much money left get. We had about \$2,000 left. I said, "Mr. Hara, you can keep the \$2,000 for another year without interest." He served us well.

Because our strike situation, the organization was so perfect, we started with twenty-six grand [\$26,000], we ended at twenty-six grand, cash. The reason why is because when we find jobs for the guys, like making coffee dryer [platforms], huge building with stuff that goes over the roof, you know, and then you get a coffee bed. Let's say we get five grand [\$5,000] on the whole job. The workers will be paid, the guys who went to the work by hour, okay. Five percent of the amount goes to the soup kitchen. So this is the way we were raising money on the side. We working for somebody, then whatever money turn over to the person, the check gotta come to the union hall. So I say, "Hey Michiko, the check is here, come and get your check." Then you come for the check, I say, "Sign your check." I give you the 75 percent cash, the check's here, and then we deposit that in the bank and take the 25 [percent], put 'em in the strike fund. This is the way we did it. We did, organizationally, just like business, you know. Control wherever the money going. We maximize using the work force to bring in the revenue and then the commodity thing. And it was a picnic every day for four months.

DT: No pun intended, huh? (Chuckles)

YA: Oh, one more thing. The doctor (Dr. N. Sternemann) asked me, "Yasu, how come your workers don't come to the dispensary anymore?"

"What do you mean, they don't go dispensary?"

"Even the chronic person don't come."

I said, "Doc, shall I invite you to our soup kitchen? You can come anytime without announcing. Because if you do, I'll bring a plate for you." We didn't have paper plate, you know, each guy gotta bring their own ceramic plate. So I got an extra plate in my drawer. When he came, I gave the plate, I say, "Doc, go in line."

He went downstairs he fill up his plate. He went up(stairs to) eat. Then before he went out, he said, "Yasu, thank you but I know now why people don't get sick. You guys all united in one. You take care everybody."

And whenever we have to buy vitamin, we buy by the gallons. And then we ask how many people get older people need vitamins. Put 'em inside the envelope, "Give to your grandpa, give to your grandma." And who buys the vitamins for us? The doctor, in his name, so we get wholesale price. So the doctor cooperated with us, 100 percent, during the strike and everything. So, no more illness during the strike.

DT: Now this is very interesting in the year 1991, where I think we are at the present, this seems like a rather simplistic answer to Michiko's question when you talk about organizational theory, your answer is really one word, and that's simply, food. Or, by way of a synonym, basic necessities. And that was it, huh?

YA: Well, food is important, yes. Because, after all, you know, during the strike, you got to get three meals a day. (Chuckles)

DT: Yeah, well, you realize, and I'm sure you're familiar reading, that this technique that you were using here in Hawai'i was essentially what had been used years earlier by Tammany Hall.

YA: I don't . . .

DT: In New York City, right?

YA: Probably so.

DT: Buy the basic necessities, food, medicine, sustenance, and funeral arrangements, if necessary, whatever's necessary.

YA: Right we (did) everything. Everything.

DT: Okay, that's one question. In other words—I'm kidding you a little bit here, chiding you along the way. But really you had a type of situation whereby you had to organize around the very basic needs of people, in order to serve the people.

Number two, you mentioned Hara and the grocery business. Is that any relation to Stanley Hara?

YA: No. No.

DT: No relation.

YA: No, no relation.

DT: He was just a retail . . .

YA: No, he's a wholesaler.

DT: Oh, wholesale.

YA: He don't retail.

DT: And had no political connection?

YA: No, no political connection.

DT: Simply a businessman . . .

YA: Businessman and . . .

DT: . . . with whom you made the arrangement.

YA: . . . I got to know him well and I figured, if one wholesaler can do that for us, you know, it would be very good. And in a strike situation, I think you gotta understand also, as I studied, you know, in the [California] Labor School, law-enforcing people were against working man. The first thing we did was, I convened the police commission. Mr. [Nick] Lycurgus, who owned the Volcano [House] hotel, was the chairman. I said, "Nick, I like you to convene all your district commander and the police chief. I would like to have a meeting with you."

And he said, "What for?"

"Well, I want to let you know, if we're going to go on strike, we want your help."

He said, "Okay."

So he convened all the high command. And this is my simple request to them. I told them, "In the annals of American labor history, the police were always with the bosses. Because all you police are one of us, all you are local, please be neutral. We will you inform you—police headquarters, twenty-four hours ahead, where we going to picket, how long we going to picket, how many number in the picket, and we'll even inform you who the picket captain going to be. So if in case you have to enforce the law, based on the ordinance or the territory (laws), federal law, you can point out to the picket captain and say to cease and desist. And we want you to be neutral, we don't want you to favor the bosses or favor us." And this is what we set up on Hawai'i County. I don't know what they did on the other county, but this is what I did. And so far, we had a very amicable relation, every strike that we conduct in Hawai'i. No more of that longshore strike, dock strike, in 1938 where the longshoreman got shot. [On August 1, 1938, over 200 demonstrators marched to Hilo's Pier 2, supporting Honolulu workers on strike against the Inter-Island Steam Navigation Company. The demonstrators were met by police officers who tear gassed, hosed, and fired their riot guns into the crowd. Fifty demonstrators were hospitalized. This incident is known as "The Hilo Massacre."] To avoid that, you know, I, with a preconceived idea, I lay the groundwork with the police.

DT: In other words you avoided blind emotion, in this situation. In other words, you wanted to make sure the police were neutral.

YA: Right.

DT: So you weren't just going to be emotional about this and assume that they were going to be on the side of management.

YA: Right.

DT: You tried the neutral. Where'd you get the idea for this? Arnold Wills, or your reading, or . . .

YA: No, you see . . .

DT: Where did you get this good . . .

YA: Well, if you study the American labor history, every incident happened in labor struggles, it says that the militia, the government forces, were against labor. And by knowing the cops myself, and there are some of them are from the laboring ranks, I can't see those people putting guns against us. You know, weapon or pressure against us. So I said, "I think the best thing for us to do is talk to the high command, get an understanding, they going be neutral."

DT: Where'd you learn this? In [California] Labor School on the West Coast, or books, or where? Or do you know even?

YA: No. When I read the American labor history, I find lot of oppression against workers. I read that.

DT: Yeah, where? What books? Do you remember what books they were or who had written them? Or . . .

YA: Okay. There was a Wobbly, I think you know him. He's from the state of Washington, Joe Hill. You heard about Joe Hill? Okay. I have a book on Joe Hill. And Joe Hill was punished. He was really screwed, you know. The power in government would just—just locking him up for the sake of locking up, because he was pro-labor. And I couldn't understand why he gotta be treated that way for helping organize the workers. So I figured I will not allow duplication of that Joe Hill incident, in my experience in labor movement.

DT: So you would attribute your know-how, here in this situation, mainly to your reading habits.

YA: Right, right.

DT: Wherever . . .

YA: No, as I mentioned to you, I'm a reading bug. I spend three, four hours a day reading. And this is my bad habit, probably, but I do read. And I scan not only on one area or subject, but I scan the large area of reading. And when I read Joe Hill's experience, I said in my mind, we can't allow in Hawai'i. And my experience show what happened, I going give one example. There was one garage superintendent, during the strike, drove a cane truck in, across the picket line. They almost kill our guys. So I stood up, I ran up there and I said, "All you guys block the truck from returning."

In the meantime, I called Captain Martin, Charlie Martin. I said, "Captain, please come."

Then, when the captain was there, I opened up the picket line, the truck came out. I told the captain, "Will you tell the truck driver to come out from the truck?"

He told him. The crank was up, everything was locked. But Martin said, "Ey get out, get out from the truck."

He came out. Captain Martin said, "As of now, and today, I don't want to see you operating no company equipment. Take this truck back to the garage."

When the workers saw his command—he's trying to kill the workers, cross the picket line, smash right through the picket line—when the workers saw the captain of the police department ordering the company stooge to take the truck to the garage, and don't drive anymore, ho, there was a big relief among the workers. The police is neutral. And I organized that neutrality and they were happy. It worked. And this is the kind of stuff, when you become a leader, you have to plan everything ahead. Something that may happen you can avoid. But, you know, you have to do lot of planning.

MK: How did you convince the police to be neutral, though? You know in previous years they were tied in . . .

YA: Well, Nick Lycurgus was a member of the Puna Hongwanji. He's a Buddhist, I'm a Buddhist. We're very close. He was the chairman of the police commission. So I got together with him, I said, "Nick, your gang gotta be neutral."

He said, "Okay. How we gonna do it?"

"I going show you how to do it. You bring your gang together, I'm going (to) talk (to them)."

So the chairman of the commission tell the police chief, you know. He also is asking a favor, to do it.

MK: So you had a personal tie with Lycurgus . . .

YA: Oh yeah, Nick was my close friend. He's a Buddhist, I'm a Buddhist.

DT: So the fellow who sat up there on Volcano House didn't exactly identify with the *lunas* down here, right?

YA: No, no, no. No, he's . . .

DT: Although he would coexist . . .

YA: Right.

DT: . . . on a business-like basis.

YA: Right. So you know, in a union organization, in structuring and making things work, the leaders has to be able to foresee if something is going to happen, basing on historical experience. And I'm a reader and I understand that, as long as I'm concerned, those things not going to repeat again.

DT: The process really takes a lot of time, doesn't it? It takes a lot of work and a lot of time, as well as a lot of thought.

YA: Well, you know, once you absorb and read and understand, those innovations to convince your rest of the colleagues to bring this matter up to another group, I don't think it's going be too difficult. I mean, it could be done and so far we were able to do it. So since that early strikes, we never had no problem with the police. No problem.

MK: Shall we stop here then pick up with politics?

DT: Fine, it's up to you. I'm interested in this organizational theory and how it came about and so it's only natural, I guess that we would move to politics because you can't exactly leave politics out as long as you're talking to people and their aspirations. You mentioned you joined the Democratic party back in nineteen . . .

YA: Thirty-seven.

DT: Who urged you to join, or did you just volunteer, or you just decided that you liked what was going on in Washington D.C.? Did you know that much about it? Or . . .

YA: No, actually what happened was, how I got interested is, I go to Japanese[-language] school. Seventeen years old, boy, I gotta walk home, go to the plantation camp. I have to pass the Olaa village. And there were couple of guys there, much older than I am. And told me, "'Ey Yasu, come down, sit down." And that was election period, you know. Election going on. He tells me, "I'm going to talk to you about President Roosevelt."

I said, "What about Roosevelt?"

"What, you don't know nothing about politics?"

"No, I know. I'm junior in high school. You know, I'm a historian. Well, what of it?"

He said, "Well, you know, if you look at the American political history, oftentimes the Republicans only take care the rich guys. They don't care for the common workers like us. And so, you know, you better study about the history of the Democratic party, about President Roosevelt, you know, and so forth."

Roosevelt got elected in '32, right? And I was freshman. So by their suggestion, I start reading about the American politics when I was seventeen years old. And I find I cannot campaign because too young. Hawai'i law says I gotta be twenty years old to be a party member. I had to wait three more years to become a party member. So when I became twenty years old, I joined the party. They had that form waiting for me. So I had secretly gone to a meeting in Hilo. Dr. [Ernest M.] Kuwahara was the Hawai'i County Democratic party [co-]chairman. We used to go up his house. And luckily I was also a leader in the Surfrider Athletic Club. And that club consisted of all the outcasts from other clubs and most of them are, well, you can say, not the consistent kind of person. They are little abnormal. They're fighters. So we got together and then we secretly campaigned for Martin Pence and Edwin DeSilva, and all the rest of the people who had got to use the Democratic party name. This is before the union came.

DT: Now you mentioned Dr. Kawahara, is that right?

YA: Dr. Kuwahara.

DT: Kuwahara. Any relation to Peter?

YA: No.

DT: No relation.

YA: Peter is a Kona family.

DT: Same name.

YA: Yeah, same name.

MK: Who were the prominent Democrats back then? You have this Dr. [Ernest M.] Kuwahara, you have Martin Pence, Edwin DeSilva.

YA: People that ran were these people, but there were other people who were not running but they were the behind the scenes people. And one of them was one *Haole* guy, I forgot his name (Milburn Gregory), but he's a manager of the Wailoa Recap Company. And unusual, you know, *Haole* being Democrat, because, those days, all *Haoles* are Republicans, right, because they control all the destinies in Hawai'i. So Martin Pence really surprised me, you know, being *Haole* and he's Democrat. Never heard that kind, but he was. And later on we had people like Tom [T.] Okino, who took the place of Martin Pence to become the [Hawai'i] County attorney. And we have Kazuhisa Abe, you know. And then these people that, who ran for the [Hawai'i County] board of supervisors, ran for the [territorial] house and [territorial] senate, and (became judge of the Hawai'i Supreme Court).

DT: Now you're moving into the [19]50s period.

YA: Right, right, right.

DT: But in the [19]40s period, with people such as Bill [William H.] Heen, Johnny [John H.] Wilson, they didn't have any particular meaning to you . . .

YA: No, because . . .

DT: . . . because they were O'ahu people . . .

YA: You remember we had a walk-out in the Democratic party.

DT: This was the 1950 [Hawai'i Democratic party] convention, and let's get to that on the next tape, because we're gonna run out.

YA: Oh, okay.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

JC: The following is a continuation of the Yasuki Arakaki interview. This is videotape number eight.

MK: Interview with Yasuki Arakaki, tape number eight.

DT: Well, my friend, I was thinking as we left the last tape, sinking slowly into the west, I was asking you about the 1950 [Hawai'i] Democratic [party] convention, which was sort of a watershed convention for the Democrats, because they had to face up to a split in their ranks which didn't get healed until later. But what do you recall about that '50 convention?

YA: Well, I represented the county of Hawai'i as one of the delegates to the convention. And I sensed something was not normal. And there was a faction, I think led by—I don't know if it's [Ingram M.] Stainback group or not. They made the motion and they wanted to remove a person like me who were named in the Hawai'i [Reluctant] 39. And I forgot that person also again, but that person tried to quiet the audience down so that they can deliberate. But the opposition group start walking out. The majority, including me, we stayed. And I remember former governor John A. Burns stood up and he told us to quietly, you know, sit down. So we listened to him and we sat down, we didn't move. But the group that were trying to get us out, walked out.

And one of them in the ILWU group was a guy named [Robert K.] Mookini. I don't know who misled him but when he come to the issue of communism, he was just like Amos [A.] Ignacio. They are 200 percent American. And they didn't want to have any implication that we are Communist-led union. But he [Mookini] had a very small following within the pineapple workers, so he didn't make an inch. I don't know where he disappeared to, but we lost sight of him, subsequent to the convention. And we had people like Castner Ogawa from Waipahu, [Hideo] "Major" Okada from Waipahu. These were some of the people who were named as one of the thirty-nine. And I think Waipahu [i.e., O'ahu Sugar Company] had the honor of having two instead of maybe one from, you know, Olaa Sugar [Company].

So the people who played a very militant role—and demographically speaking, most of them are niseis, second-generation Japanese. Why they pick only on us, I don't know. There were very few in other racial group among the guys who were cited. So if you will take down names of the thirty-nine, you can see who they are. Most of the plantation workers were niseis, you know, second-generation Japanese. And I guess they picked up real vocal, real stubborn. You know, we were subject to intimidation, but we refuted that, you know, we fought back. Because we knew what we were fighting for.

And in the Broom Brigade, We the Women. They were organized by the employers—managerial wives and their friends. And they were with placards and everything, trying to intimidate us. But we knew what the purpose was, to destroy this union. And one thing that you folks gotta understand, the ILWU general policy were not endorsing Democratic party, per se. That's the reason why we have people who are endorsed Republicans. And Senator Yates, my father-in-law, was Republican. But he was supported by labor, because he was liberal.

And, I don't know if you know or not, but 1944, there was an enactment in territorial legislature, Little Wagner Act. The Little Wagner Act is something like a National [Labor] Relations Act, which covers agricultural workers. And you know who spearhead that for us? That was Republican senator [William H.] "Doc" Hill, from the Big Island. And he was awfully mad, because after that help he gave us, we [ILWU] failed to endorse him. And the reason I see was, during the investigation of the Japanese in Hawai'i, during the war [World War II], he testified in one of the Congressional hearings. He said, "Once a Jap, always a Jap." Making the innuendo that they are loyal to Emperor Hirohito, or someplace else.

So that news came out, and that news was given to us in the [*Honolulu Star-Bulletin*], and *Star-Bulletin* was [owned by Joseph R.] Farrington. And Farrington and Doc Hill never got along.

So, I got little hurt myself, too, because Jack Hall was trying to get Doc Hill endorsed. Jack Hall was not a Democratic party leader, he was a person who will support on bipartisan basis. And off the record, my sister was the cook for Doc Hill. Housekeeper. And one day, I remember, in 1946, when I was the PAC chairman—my office was in Pier 11—my mother-in-law called me, Mrs. Yates. She said, "I want to convey a message to you." She said, "Papa," that means, my father-in-law, "wants you to consider supporting Doc Hill for ILWU endorsement."

And I told her that Jack Hall nor myself run the PAC. It's run, not by the Democratic party, it's run by the PAC. And unfortunately, he's not going to be endorsed. I think there were lot of pressure on the PAC representative from ILWU, because of the comment he [Hill] made, "Once a Jap, always a Jap." In other words, Japanese cannot be trusted. And, if this is the implication the Japanese get during the pressure we had during the war, well, he's not our friend. So even though I wanted to support Doc Hill, Jack Hall wanted to support Doc Hill, we failed because the majority said, he's out. And these are some of the inner endorsement, whether you Democrat or Republican. And when I become a PAC chairman, even though I'm a die-hard Democrat, I have to carry out the decision made by the majority. So sometimes, it's unpalatable, but I gotta carry.

DT: In other words, you're really telling us when push came to shove, your union activities took precedence over party.

YA: Oh, naturally, naturally, because that's our bread and butter. Naturally. Naturally, you're right. Absolutely right. Union come first.

DT: Returning to 1950, you then stayed in the convention that year.

YA: Oh, I didn't walk off, I stayed.

DT: And the right-wingers walked out.

YA: Walked out. They were a minority, in number.

DT: So you ended up with, what, two parties, or—things weren't too good shape for the Democrats at that time, were they?

YA: Well, even though they were walk-out, the person trying to get us out didn't have the rank-and-file support. There are noted Democrats on the top level, but they didn't have the bottom. So, on the election, too, we showed that even though we had that attack as Communists, we delivered the vote.

DT: So you being attacked, as Communists, you remained the core of the Democratic party.

YA: Right.

DT: Now then, how does that square with the allegations that remained at the time, that the ILWU was on a concerted attempt to take over the Democratic party?

YA: Well, the opposition makes that claim because they felt that the number of people who were endorsed by the ILWU, to the Republicans, were very minimal. Only one or two or three, right, and they are angry because we are the majority, we control the precinct. And for your information, Jack Burns developed the precinct. The money we raised for Jack Burns' campaign on this island, he told us he don't want one copper penny sent to Honolulu. "We want you to spend that money on the precinct. If you have a territorial convention, Democratic party, if they don't have the money, spend the money to buy the [plane] ticket and send them to the convention." This is the way we use this money. If in case a person goes in the hospital, Burns' worker, they tell us to send the flower bouquet; if a person's family [member] dies, in the funeral, take one beautiful bouquet on top the coffin. This is the way we communicated, in fact, with the public, with the people. And this is the kind of party Governor Burns built.

DT: I thought you might want to make the point, however, that after 1950, if the ILWU had wanted to take over the party, it would have done so.

YA: Yes, but it's inimical to the best interests because in order to be able to support progressive Republican [candidates], let's say if the ILWU control the party, per se, they cannot endorse the Republicans, liberal Republicans. They cannot. So they stayed out.

DT: So, in essence, it would be your position, the ILWU never really intended or wanted to take over the party.

YA: Jack Hall was against this, 100 percent. Jack Hall was against this 100 percent. The reason because they gonna nail him if he does.

DT: In any event, it didn't happen, did it?

YA: It didn't happen.

DT: But then came 1952, some new things did happen. You might want to pick that up in the '52 convention. McKinley High School and . . .

YA: Well, you know, subsequent to the period where they tried to hit the "[Reluctant] 39," Governor Burns played a very important role. Everybody built around his belief, okay? He was the primary person we trying to get ahead. So whatever we did, the opposition just disappeared. So, in fact, on the paper it looked like we controlled the party, but I don't know,

no control.

DT: Didn't you have some sort of a harmony move and didn't the Big Island figure in that because Jack Burns, of course, became territorial chairman again of the party, but wasn't it in '52 that you dumped Johnny Wilson as national committeeman, and the Big Island threw a whole bunch of proxy votes to Frank Fasi for national committeeman?

MK: That was the year Albert Tani came in with seventy-one proxy votes? Were you involved . . .

YA: You mean, Al . . .

MK: I think his name was Albert Tani.

YA: Yeah.

MK: You weren't involved in the decision making . . .

YA: No, we weren't involved in that, no.

DT: 'Cause it was billed at the time as a harmony move in the Democratic party. And the Democratic platform of '52 was in essence changed very little in '54, and that became the basis for the big revolution of '54.

YA: Well, actually you know, the inner party struggle, as long as I'm concerned, which was generated from other than the Big Island, we did not actually participate in decision making in their activities, because we had our own program. The main purpose of Jack Burns was telling us to deliver Big Island, whoever is endorsed by the Democratic party and the PAC. And lately, the latter part of the [19]50s for some reason, ILWU never supported Republicans, all Democrats.

MK: You know, I was wondering, how did that PAC work? Candidates would come before you, and the PAC would vote on it?

YA: What they do is, all candidates are offered to—whether it's Republican, Independent, or what—offered to come to a ILWU PAC meeting. We go invite them. Then we ask them questions about, "What do you think about this particular issue?" They talk mostly about labor issue, you know. And anything that concern the working stiff, okay. So we ask 'em, "What is your position on this?" Most cases they will agree, you know, because they don't want to offend us. But usually we check their background of their activities, and we nullify them. And that's when we take a vote. But the person have good records like Kazuhisa Abe, Nelson Doi and Shun [Shunichi] Kimura. This kind of people, we don't even ask questions. The doubtful one, we take a vote. Then once a person establish himself that he's for the working stiff, he get repeated all the time, over and again.

For your information, Amos Ignacio was ILWU 142, Big Island director, right? Okay. He ran two times for representative as a Democrat, he got elected, right? The first time there were no union, he was elected. The second time, he was union, he get elected. The third time ran for senate, he stayed home. The reason why he stayed home because he tried to split the union.

So the members said, "We're not gonna accept you. You don't speak for us anymore," and so they got rid of him.

So the members are not fooled. They know who they're pushing for. And funny you know, ILWU members those days, when we make the decision, usually they carry because, before we come to the PAC meeting, we discuss it at ground level. We more or less know what they want. And we go to the PAC meeting, we fight like hell—nobody will listen, we fight inside there. We get their opinions (chuckles). We sometimes get outvoted but, we try to carry their opinion and belief. But majority of the time, they accede to our request. But many times, I fought against Jack Hall, I fought against many of the top leaders that what they doing is wrong.

Let me tell you something, when Tom [Thomas P.] Gill ran for U.S. Congress [in 1962], I think, if I'm not mistaken, Jack Hall pushed for [Hiram L.] Fong, right, if you check the history. Right, Dan? Right? Do you know who we supported, Big Island? Tom Gill. Tom Gill. Against Jack Hall. And Tom Gill got elected, U.S. Congress.

DT: Yeah, for the Congress. But he didn't make it against Hiram Fong. [Gill ran and lost against ILWU-backed Fong for the U.S. Senate in 1964. YA is talking about Gill's victorious election for the U.S. House in 1962.]

YA: No, no, he ran that race against one Republican which Jack Hall supported, right? Who the Republican was that? [Republicans opposing Democrats Gill and Spark M. Matsunaga for two U.S. House seats in 1962 were Richard C. "Ike" Sutton and Albert W. Evensen.]

DT: Oh. You're gonna have to help me, I'm . . .

YA: No, but let me tell you something, Republican ran against Tom Gill, okay.

DT: Yeah, it wasn't close, as I remember.

YA: And then Jack Hall supported the Republican. We, on the Big Island (supported Democrats).

DT: You supported Gill.

YA: . . . we supported Gill. They have personal difference, those guys, with Gill, you know. But we see, between the other person and Gill, Gill's record is for labor. I don't know if he's close friend of [Arthur] Rutledge or what, that's no never mind. He's for labor. So we couldn't sell the other guy to our membership. So we said, "Jack . . ."

DT: Yeah, who was the other guy, help me.

YA: Oh, I forgot the name, but it was a Republican.

DT: Oh, I thought you knew it, and here I am apologizing because I can't remember either! (Chuckles)

YA: But, you know, what I'm trying to say is, you know, there are splits within the union, and we don't necessarily endorse what Jack said because, on the record, I think Gill's record is good

for pro-labor.

DT: Did you really feel that way, but it was also alleged, if I remember that particular race, even if I can't remember who he opposed [Sutton and Evensen], that some people in the Burns group, in particular, were anxious to see Tom Gill head to Washington. Get him out of the hair of the people in the state government.

YA: No, not necessarily true.

DT: That was not in your reason.

YA: No, that's not our reason.

DT: It may be true someplace, but not here.

YA: In comparison to the one Jack endorsed, we felt that Gill's record is better. I know there's a personality play in Jack and Gill. Jack didn't like Gill because he's close with Rutledge. They even accused me that I'm going take a sugar union to join with Rutledge. Just the way I was accused by Jack Hall. And I'm not that kind of guy, you know. And so you can see where I'm coming from.

DT: Yeah, you're coming from a very maverick position, that's for sure. (Chuckles)

YA: No, no, but what I'm trying to say, you know, if I can be accused as going to be a stoolie for Rutledge, he can forget it. I never was a stoolie for Rutledge, you know. Then, just because Gill is close to Rutledge, it doesn't make that, you know, it's unpalatable.

DT: No, that would not make Gill a lesser labor person because he in essence worked for Rutledge.

YA: And for your information, after Gill got elected, any labor law in U.S. Congress, he sends the draft over to me, "I want comment. Pro-modification, or against?" He sent me every labor bill. I was his frontline pulse maker. That's how I played a very important role for Gill in U.S. Congress.

DT: I'm almost inclined to jump ahead then to that Senate race, two years later [1964]. Because it was only two years later as I recall when Gill lost to Hiram Fong. Did you still stick with Gill?

YA: Straight through. I never wavered.

DT: Then how come Fong got the ILWU endorsement again?

YA: Well, again, you know . . .

DT: You departed from Jack Hall and company, right?

YA: Well, again, you know, I don't all the time win, right? Sometimes Jack Hall win.

DT: Oh, I see, okay. (Chuckles)

MK: You know, since you were a Gill supporter in those races, how did that figure in into your relationship with Burns? Gill and Burns never got along.

YA: Okay. In the case of Burns, okay, when Kenny [Kenneth F.] Brown ran against Tom Gill [in 1966, for lieutenant governor], Tom Gill got elected, right? Okay. My father-in-law told me that in order to develop economically on the Big Island, we gotta get some big landowners to let go their land to make hotel development in the Kohala coast. And my father-in-law, Senator Yates, was very close to Burns. Then he said that Gill had no contact in Wall Street. The person have contact in Wall Street is Kenny Brown. He's a Princeton [University graduate], and Princeton is New York, you know, they control money. So if Kenny Brown goes to Washington, I mean go to New York, and talk to those financial tycoons, "I'm sure they can bring money to that coast." My father-in-law was a Republican, they were very close friend with Governor Burns, so my father-in-law told me that he was the one that convinced Jack Burns to support Kenny Brown [for lieutenant governor].

Now, to me, Tom Gill, if he get elected, cannot help us, Big Island. Kenny Brown can help us. To me, Big Island come first, over Tom Gill. So I took a message from my father-in-law and also from Governor Burns. So we got, you know, Ben [Benjamin] Menor to be the campaign coordinator for this island. And he did a beautiful job. We led Gill hands down on this island, we delivered Kenny Brown.

So if you talk about issues, person, I don't support Gill because he's Gill, I support in comparison to Kenny Brown, what can the two help for us on the Big Island. In this particular case, if Kenny Brown get elected, he will get all the contact with Wall Street, right? Because Princeton. And he can get all the financial tycoon invest the money. Mauna Kea Beach Hotel never happen because happened. It happened because of Kenny Brown. Kenny Brown contact with my father-in-law, which was smart. That's how they got 'em. And who was the leader at that time? Our great Governor Burns. But he got the help of Kenny, he got the help of my father-in-law. That's why we got the Mauna Kea Beach Hotel. And Gill would never be able to do that for us, even though he got elected. So, you know, we have to make decisions basing on what kind of benefit we gonna get from any individual that we are endorsing. So, I was not consistent in supporting Gill, per se.

DT: And so you backed Gill for U.S. Congress [in 1962], you backed Gill in the Democratic primary for the U.S. Senate [in 1964]?

YA: Right.

DT: Over against what's his name, today's guru of, you know, I mean . . .

YA: Hiram Fong?

MK: [Nadao] Yoshinaga.

DT: Yoshinaga.

YA: Yoshinaga.

DT: You backed Gill over Yoshinaga?

YA: What race you talking about?

DT: Democratic primary for U.S. Senate. Yoshinaga opposed Gill.

YA: On the Congress—what—the Senate?

DT: For the Senate race, Gill won that [primary election], and ran against Hiram Fong [in the general election] and lost to Hiram Fong.

YA: No, no, on that one there I supported Yoshinaga.

DT: You supported Yoshinaga in the primary . . .

YA: Right.

DT: . . . but Gill in the . . .

YA: Right.

DT: . . . general against Fong [in 1964]. Then you supported Brown . . .

YA: On the lieutenant governorship [in 1966].

DT: In other words, you were following what you felt was the union's best interest as a pressure group, right?

YA: Well, it's not necessarily union, because sugar plantations were going down, right. We needed job. So what we wanted to do was to create a new business in Hawai'i and then. . . . My father-in-law told me many things about economics in the northern [part of the Big] Island. You hear about the Akoni Pule Highway, between Kohala and Kawaihae. My father-in-law told me, "That's not Akoni Pule Highway, that's Julian Yates Highway."

I said, "How's that, Grandpa?"

"You know, every senator and every representative has a pork barrel amount for them, right. They gotta spend wherever they want 'em. I spent my pork barrel to build a road, we build a road from Kohala to Kawaihae. [Representative] Akoni Pule spent someplace else on his money. I spent there. That's supposed to be Julian Yates' road."

"Grandpa, why didn't you spend that in Kona? You come from Kona."

"Well, you know, the manager at Kohala Sugar [Company] called me one day, he said, 'Julian, we have to haul sugar to Hilo. Kind of expensive. Over the mountain road. Why can't we load sugar in Kawaihae Harbor? Ship can come in. But they want paved road.' 'I fix you up.'"

So he took the Kona money and built that Akoni Pule road. So my father-in-law was trying to

save Kohala Sugar Company, although he's from Kona. Because he wants to preserve the sugar company, okay? All political, and he wants to develop a resort in that area. And the only guy who can do it, between Gill and Kenny Brown, they think Kenny can do it. So economically, we are thinking about build a nice highway, save the Kohala Sugar [Company] from spending unnecessary money, goes to Kawaihae. That's directly ILWU benefit, right. Hotel—we never had no hotel organized on this island. That's the first one gonna be, if we're gonna have. But we never dreamt that Mauna Kea gonna be [organized by] ILWU. But it came.

DT: Good enough, we gotta change tapes.

(Laughter)

END OF SIDE TWO

TAPE NO. 17-99-2-91; SIDE ONE

JC: This is a continuation of the Yasuki Arakaki interview. This is videotape number nine.

MK: Interview with Yasuki, tape number nine.

DT: If I may, I'd like to do a flashback. Critical to Democratic success in 1954, I would suggest, was probably the platform of '54 and also '52, which was sort of the earlier draft. You have any clear picture of a fellow by the name of Robert [G.] Dodge, who was a principal architect on that platform?

YA: No, I don't. Maybe he was, but my memory is failing, because the person that I don't get contact every day, and then all of a sudden, the person appear, I can't remember, yeah.

DT: All right then, if I may, I don't want to press you about that, but with respect to who backed whom, we were talking about Gill and you had backed him at times and had not backed him at times. I suggest that maybe you personally, in terms of your own political activities, were moving away from a position of, say, the ILWU as an interest group, that you were beginning to think in broader terms of what is the best course as a matter of economic necessity for the state of Hawai'i. Is that true? In terms of your thinking, or am I drawing a misinterpretation?

YA: Well, you know, if you look at my previous, all my remarks, I'm a pretty flexible person. My dogma is not, you know, 1 million percent Democrat. I'm a Democrat. Some of their policies, their resolutions and their endorsement, doesn't fit to the benefit of the people, generally, as a whole. Many of the things the ILWU pushed for is not only for unions, but it try to serve the mass, whether the union or not. Social benefits primarily. For example, like workman's [workers'] comp [compensation]. Very important. And whatever benefit which is prescribed by law that we can enact, we try to push. So it's not only trade union issue, but social issue, which will benefit. So if you take the two party [system], one represent mostly the money group. The other, the Democratic party, generally, in Hawai'i, represent the interests of the mass of the people. So some of the Republicans, they changed, they join the

Democratic party, because that's the only way they can get elected. And . . .

DT: So you had a certain amount of incursion there. Which leaves me—I've gotta be sort of mean to you and I'm gonna ask you a real tough question. After Burns got elected governor in '62, after his ill-fated '59 [attempt], there was a decided turn toward Merchant Street on the part of the Burns administration. Was that shocking to you? Were you troubled by it? Or were you pleased by it? Was this a way of perpetuating his leadership? That's one side of the argument. The other side was that he'd sold out to Merchant Street and so now all the Republicans are climbing on the Democratic wagon. You were going to end up with these same people, using Merchant Street as a symbol, in control of—not the Republican party any longer but the Democratic party, in charge of the state.

YA: No, I think you ask a very—a question that I think all of us should, you know, review. And I think many changes have taken place and if you read the book called *Land and Power [in Hawai'i]*, it tells you that many of the Burns cronies, who used the leverage, as a member of the Democratic party, and got appointed and have taken position, whether they appointed or elected, they were doing exactly what the Big Five power was doing. So there was a transitional period where I think it was—well, what can I say in words? They were not the real Democrats of the late [19]40s and the early [19]50s. I guess Governor Burns had no absolute control, because people you see named on that book called *Land and Power [in Hawai'i]*, they were strong Democrats, they helped build the party. But they built themselves and their coffer. And it's unfortunate it happened, but it happened. I'm not happy, because I'm not one of them.

DT: In other words, the essence of what you're telling me, and again you can contradict me, you sort of regretted this turn to the Merchant Street, the people who used to run the town and still wanted to run the town, so to speak. Sort of regretted this move on the part of Jack. Not that he profited himself, but that many of the people who had supported him suddenly, as you said yourself, started doing the things that the Republicans used to do.

YA: Right, correct. I'm not happy. But I want to let you know, because you mentioned about—he did not benefit. I want to give a little background of Governor Burns' funeral [in 1974]. After the funeral, well let's say prior to the funeral, I was called by Jimmy [James S.] Burns and said, "Yasu, you coming to Dad's funeral?"

I said, "Yeah."

"Mom said she wants you to be an active pallbearer, but make sure, she don't want you to wear black suit. Because this is not a farewell, it's just an aloha. You wear something light."

I said, "Okay."

And later on I found out, after the funeral, he owed \$32,000 for the house that he built in Waimea, and the contractor wasn't paid. [Matsuo "Matsy"] Takabuki, present Bishop Estate trustee, advanced the \$32,000, paid off the contractor, and Mrs. [Beatrice M.] Burns collected Jack Burns' contribution—we get two kind contribution, one Jack put in so he get some money going build up on his retirement. And the one the state put in. You get two kind and then they join together. So whatever Jack invested, Mrs. Burns took the money out, pay back Takabuki. So I know governor didn't have any money. So that man did not—he was not

involved in this. And if you look at the, again the *Land and Power* [in Hawai'i], you get the names of people who did exactly what the rich was doing to further themselves. It's unfortunate it happened. I wasn't happy, but I'm very glad that my name is not there. You know, [Harry] "Scrub" Tanaka's name is not there. Tadao Okimoto's name is not there. Mits Tanaka's name is not there. All the men I mentioned to you, we are the strength, the frontline soldiers for Jack Burns on this island.

DT: But you may be a little resentful, aren't you, the fact that your names are not there, but you're proud of that. But that other people's names are there, and you're not very proud of them.

YA: I was . . .

DT: There's a certain amount of feeling on your part . . .

YA: Dan, I was invited, I did not accept.

DT: You mean to be a joint partner in this or that?

YA: Right, I was offered twice to make my buck. I won't tell you the name of the person. I won't tell you actually what land I'm talking about. But first offer was, "Yasu, do you have couple of thousand dollars? I can triple that for you in less than six months. Oh, we only want down payment in original capital."

DT: There are a variety of ways of doing that sort of thing . . .

YA: Right, okay right.

DT: . . . I think we would both agree.

YA: Well, I . . .

DT: Matsy Takabuki. In the case of Jack Burns, in your view, as far as my view, I have no evidence whatsoever that Jack or his wife ever profited from public office in any way, shape, or form, other than the salary, which they collected. But if Matsy paid that off, why did Mrs. Burns have to pay back Matsy? I'm surprised that he would even take it, because he's a multi-millionaire today, right?

YA: Well, Mrs. Burns and Jack Burns were unusual persons. Very unusual. They're—I don't know, they believe in Lord Christ, practice or not, but they are very religious people, and she will not accept compensation from anybody because she has the money to pay back. She got the money, she pay them back.

DT: And Matsy may not even have wanted it, you say, suggesting.

YA: Well, you know, I don't know, I cannot speak for Matsy. I don't know why Matsy was the one that paid the contractors, I don't know why.

DT: Yeah, that would be a logical one, and it would make sense. It's not your business or my

business to sit in judgment on Matsy.

YA: Right.

DT: But, I simply bring this in to say that there had been those whom we both recognize, you mentioned *Land and Power* [in Hawai'i], who have profited mightily from public position as against those whose names are not in that book, which you have indicated.

MK: Yeah, earlier you mentioned, like, Scrub Tanaka, Tadao Okimoto, these men were very active, yeah?

YA: They were the frontline soldiers, they're the lieutenant—they were the commanders on this island for Burns' campaign, Burns' machine. And they are real dedicated, sincere people that really served—they were just like Burns, duplicate of Burns.

MK: Can you tell us something about the backgrounds of these men and what they actually did here?

YA: First of all, the two Tanaka brothers, under the instruction of Jack Burns, to go precinct by precinct, sign 'em up, organize the party, meet with them. And what Jack Burns said was, when he get elected, he wants this precinct people to convene, submit the names of the nominees. He want two names for every position. And he will pick one of the two. And he don't want the names to come from the county committee. He don't want the names to come from the district committee. He wants the names to come from the precinct, so you gotta meet. That's the orders we get from Governor Burns. We carry 'em out, explicitly. That's the way we did it.

And when you come to a funeral, when you see one beautiful bouquet on the casket, it said, "Condolence from Governor John A. Burns." Everybody milling around the casket going to say, "How come this guy deserve?" You know, beautiful bouquet from the governor of Hawai'i. "Who the hell is this guy?"

To that I say, "Oh, the son is a campaign coordinator of that district."

I get instruction from Scrub Tanaka, he's the island boss, right. "Yasu, if anything happen in Puna district, all the Burns' family, you take care now."

One happened in Volcano, Goya family. Very poor guy, farmer. Very flimsy casket, but had a beautiful bouquet, "Condolence from Governor John A. Burns." Small number in the funeral because you know, nobody knew him. But everybody walk around the casket and shake his head and say, "How is this man been honored by the governor?"

Then the people add two and two together and say, "Oh, Tsugo, that's right, Tsugo is the governor's representative this area." The people say, "He's a great governor, he never forgot the people who worked for him on the bottom."

This is the way he communicated from his governor's office, way in the boondocks, in the farmland in Volcano. This is how he did it. We were the frontlines who carried his orders. So all the flower shop make money.

DT: On balance wouldn't you say, that Jack Burns, one of his great virtues was he knew and understood people very well without trying to remake them?

YA: Well, I don't know. He was a policeman first. During the wartime, there was lot of investigation taking place about the Japanese. He was one and only guy stood up during the Congressional investigation, "Japanese are no different than any other nationality." Trust them. Spoke for us, the niseis.

DT: Yeah, when you're referring to as a sponsor for niseis there's no question about that.

YA: I never forgot that, you know.

DT: There's no question about that. No question about that. Whether you were AJA [American of Japanese Ancestry], or whether you were Hawaiian or Filipino, or Mainland *Haole*, or whatnot, Jack Burns pretty much accepted you as you were, without trying to remake you and moralize, even though he had this strong attachment to his church.

YA: Oh, I know that. He's very strong.

DT: He didn't try to remake you into [Roman] Catholic, did he?

YA: No, no. Well he praise me, I'm a diehard Buddha. You know, I'm not an ordinary Buddha, I'm a Buddha. You know, I practice my religion like the way he practice his, you know, his Catholic religion.

DT: So you ended up respecting one another . . .

YA: Right, right. And he's part of me of being the Buddha.

DT: Which is a nice bond to have.

YA: Right, right. Well, it's very hard to say, you know, it's hard to find another person like Jack Burns. It's going be very difficult to find a duplicate of that man. He's very unselfish. And so dedicated for the interest of mankind.

DT: Well, I think you said it very well about Jack Burns, but let's take one step further toward the present. He was succeeded by George [R.] Ariyoshi, and then by [John D.] Waihee. Did you find some similar virtues in these two . . .

YA: No, none whatsoever.

DT: . . . or not?

YA: None whatsoever. I didn't accept Ariyoshi method because he was not a communicator with the bottom. He makes policy and he hands out and has to be his way. And I did not accept that kind of philosophy. He was not a party builder, to begin with. He came on the gravy train of Burns machine, Burns' party. And he didn't do anything to continue to build that party.

DT: And moved even closer to, using as a symbol again, Merchant Street.

YA: Right.

DT: I got that right?

MK: Given that assessment, then, why were you involved in his campaigns? You were his campaign chair for Puna.

YA: I never supported Ariyoshi, ever since Governor Burns died, I never did. Because I didn't believe he was building the party on the bottom. He never gave us any help. All the money they was raising for him on this island went to Honolulu. Not one copper penny was here. And you can't build a party without money. Because lot of the country people no more money for buy plane ticket go Honolulu.

DT: But the neighbor islands still backed up Ariyoshi, all the time. He carried them.

YA: Well, they did. They did.

DT: Was it mostly out of nostalgia for the past or the Burns image?

YA: But I don't think he [Ariyoshi] had the kind of support when Jack was here.

DT: It was quantitative and not in-depth. Is that what you're trying to say?

YA: Right, right.

DT: Same would be true for Waihee, would it?

YA: Well, I went openly support Waihee. I worked very hard for him [in 1986]. I got out in the second election [in 1990]. And the very reason is, I asked this women who represented Waihee, came to Honolulu—we raised, the last election, Hilo, eleven grand [\$11,000]. I asked her, "Is it possible for some of the money we spent to send precinct delegates to Maui convention?"

She says, "No. All the money going to Honolulu."

Well, I told Tadao Okimoto and Bill [William J.] Bonk, I will not support Waihee again. Not because I don't want him, I don't want the campaign committee action that they're not going to spend money on the Big Island, all the money going to Honolulu. I can't accept that. That's no different than Ariyoshi. He's not going to build the party. If you see, the last election [1990], I don't know how many million dollars the newspaper say Waihee got. Where he got the money, over one million dollars? From the rank and filers? No, Waihee got all the money from business people.

DT: So you would feel to this day then that, you've sort of gone, in terms of your career, union was number one, build support for that, build it up. Then I think you became, if I read you correctly, a little bit interested in economic development, in other words supported Kenny Brown, because he's close to Princeton and Wall Street and Hawai'i's going to need this in

the future. And now you're talking in terms of, when you mentioned Waihee and Ariyoshi, you're thinking in terms of maybe we ought to devote more time to strengthening the Democratic party as an institution and as an organization. Is that correct?

YA: I always wanted to continue Burns' program on building the party on the bottom. I always—I'm a rank-and-file organizer. I helped the two Tanaka brothers doing it.

DT: You were willing to go along with that. Now I'm being kind of tough on you. You were willing to build up a party, except there were times when the union overrode that, and you would support somebody else.

YA: Yeah, right. Maybe I might be inconsistent, but I make my determination, if the person is going to acquire all the wealth by himself, it's not going to build the party, it's not going to help the mass. You know, when a person like Ariyoshi get fined from the immigration department, whoever, or the department [customs] that handling the material that come in from foreign country and they get fined for x number of thousand dollars, it's an example of dishonesty and I can't accept that kind of person as my friend or my support.

DT: So you're really giving us a new dimension now, are you not? And that is even deeper than union or economic development of party, is a certain moral position . . .

YA: Well I . . .

DT: . . . that you think should take precedence over all else. In evaluating a politician, Mr. X, Mr. Y, or Mr. A or Mr. T.

YA: See, look, Dan, I want to let you know that ever since I was a child, I never hoped to accumulate any bank balance or live in a castle. Because of my background, [being] Okinawan, I feel and I felt—still feel, that as long I can survive like an average person, I think I gotta be honest to people and don't try to take advantage of my position to accumulate those wealth. I am not that kind of person. So my actions, whatever decision I make is based on that kind of feeling. So anybody that would try to take advantage of the work and try to accumulate for themselves, I'm not happy. I'm not happy. I tell that person, gotta share. Exactly like Governor Burns.

DT: So you're really saying that your support for Governor Burns was really based upon, as you perceived it, his high moral position, which went beyond party or pressure group or anything of that sort. That you respected that so much, you practice that so much in your life, that that would be the number one item.

YA: Yeah, but you know, the latter part of Burns administration, what happened, I'm really unhappy because the people that got involved in this, simple word, *cockaroaching*, is not he himself, it's the people that he appointed. Some of the people that was working under him. And they really hurt Jack's principle. I don't know, if you read the book, again, (chuckles) it tells you who those guys are.

DT: Yeah, in other words, you regret this sort of loss of a moral position of the Democratic party, perhaps even of the union.

YA: Even the union, right.

DT: Even of the union, or even of other personalities that might not be closely associated with the union or . . .

YA: Right.

DT: That's very interesting and shows us the strength of your bond between, let's say, Burns the Catholic and you the Buddhist.

YA: Well, again, you know, it's not because I'm a Buddhist or he's Catholic. I think that man is a—to me, if he talk about Christianity, I think he is Jesus Christ. That's what I believe. That man is flawless, he's clean.

DT: Yeah, I can imagine one person who would object to that statement, and that would be Jack Burns himself. (Laughs)

YA: Well, he's gone already but . . .

DT: I know, but he wouldn't like that. He might agree with everything else you said, but I don't think he'd like that one.

YA: And I tried to follow his—you know, his demeanor, his program and everything, I try to follow him. I try to imitate the best I can. And I'm happy and my wife accept that program and belief, you know.

MK: You know, we've been talking a lot about, more like state politics, but I know you've been involved a lot in just local politics on the Big Island. So maybe we can, you know, go back a little bit and start talking about the politicians that you knew locally. Starting way back, if you knew Tom [Thomas T.] Sakakihara or [Tom Tomekichi] Okino and moving up to more contemporary politicians.

YA: Well, you know, when it comes to the early level, before the union came, as I said previously, it's unusual to have one *Haole* person, guys like Martin Pence, run as a Democrat, because you no see no *Haole* run for Democrat. Even my father-in-law, he's half-*Haole*, half-Hawaiian, but he runs as Republican. Well, we had people like, you know, Edwin De Silva, who ran for the [Hawai'i County] board of supervisors. And the Surfrider Athletic Club, which I was the president. This was prior to the union, and this is prior to the [modern] Democratic party. We were able to generate enough house-to-house campaign and get these people elected. The boss didn't know how we were doing it because, if he know, we get fired. Then we have a person like Tom Okino, who followed Martin Pence [as Hawai'i County attorney]. He was deputy to Martin Pence. So when Martin Pence was elevated to the circuit court, Tom Okino ran for the county attorney, so we got him elected. Now these are all before the union again. Then we had a guy named Sakai, I think, in Kohala, I think, you know. He ran and he didn't have any opposition from the Republicans, I don't know why. His wife was part Hawaiian. And Kohala have plenty Hawaiian, so I guess maybe the wife's family had lot to do. But he got reelected over and over.

And I don't know what year was that we had election in the territorial legislature, house was

tie and the senate was tie. We weren't able to get enough people to be elected so that we can get the majority. And there was one representative from Kona who died while he was in office. And we ran a person, I forgot his name again, but we elected him to replace this—his name is Aona, I think, Representative Aona. Then we elected this person as a Republican. So house, was we got the majority and senate was tie. So we were able to negotiate by two house basis, compromise, you know. Senate, we got Republican one come in and the house one Democratic come in and then we compromise. These were one of the early struggle when I went through.

Now, guys like Kazuhisa Abe, he was very close to us in ILWU. Kazuhisa come from Pepe'ekeo. He's a plantation boy. Then one day, the newspaper said that the—Sakakihara claimed that ILWU is Communist dominated. And he bought one newspaper ad saying don't support ILWU-endorsed candidate because they are Communist. So I was in the ILWU office and I was trying to look for Kazuhisa Abe, who is an attorney. Then I drafted a counter and I tried to buy a newspaper ad. Election is on Monday, so I had to buy the ad on Sunday. I called the [*Hilo*] *Tribune-Herald* ad department on Saturday. I said, "I know it's kind of late, but can you give me space?"

"How many inch?"

"Probably half a page."

"But you have to bring that sample of what you gonna print by five o'clock, Saturday afternoon."

We had a meeting at the ILWU office, eight o'clock in the morning, and I called Kazuhisa Abe, he was in one of the—what you call kind of place where Japanese get a dining room. But anyway he was there and I called him, I say, "Kazuhisa, will you come over?"

DT: I think we better stop here. If you can remember, "Kazuhisa, come over," next tape.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

JC: This is a continuation of the Yasuki Arakaki interview. This is videotape number ten and the last tape in the series.

MK: Interview with Mr. Yasuki Arakaki. This is tape number ten. And we were just talking about Kazuhisa Abe.

YA: Coming back to Kazu, we had the meeting in the morning and I was able to get in touch with him. Asked him to come to the ILWU office. And I prepared a counter ad against Sakakihara's charges that ILWU is led by Communists. This was a general election. Sakakihara was the Republican nominee. I forgot who the Democratic nominee, in any case. I prepared that and then the [*Hilo*] *Tribune-Herald* ad department were kind enough to give us last-minute space for Sunday publication. We put out half-page ad, my counter charges to

Sakakihara. I question him instead of making charges. Is this the person that represented the Hawai'i [Sugar] Planters' Association? Question mark. Is this the person that, in fact, was giving the inside information to the employer, you know, agencies, instead of supporting the [workers]? There were two more other items which I asked question, question, question, in the newspaper ad. He got smashed Monday. Because everything what I charged there was true. But I didn't say he was, I say, "Is this the person? Is this the person? Is this the person?" So I said, "Kazu, how about it?"

"Fly 'em, this work."

I said, "Thanks Kazu."

So, we put 'em in the paper and Sakakihara stayed home. And it redeemed me to certain extent, because they was attacking me as a Communist in a union, you see. So Kazu helped me on that one.

Now, coming back to Tom Okino. This is prior to the union. I was active Democratic party when the war began. Tom Okino was asked, I don't know about the chain of command, but they were looking for translators in the U.S. military, and he knew that I was bilingual. He came after me and said, "Yasu, I understand you were a honor student in Japanese[-language] school and they're [i.e., Military Intelligence Service] looking for translators for the translator corps in the U.S. military. Why don't you volunteer in the group?"

I said, "Look Tom, I get eight more brothers and sisters behind me. Can I feed and help my family by getting that military pay and give my mother? Let's say I might be in Saipan, you know, I might be in Guam. Maybe I might be in China. With that money I send home, can I support the family? If your answer is yes, I going volunteer."

Then he said, "Oh sure."

So in the meantime, I call up my girlfriend and said, "There's a pressure upon me to volunteer in the translator corps. Now what do you want me to do?"

"No. Don't go, I come, I get married to you right away."

I said this before, but this is what happened when, you know, Okino was trying to crank me to become a translator. So Okino and I was very close. And then the reason why we became close because he was supporting Martin Pence as a deputy attorney. And I didn't know Pence himself but Okino was his close friend, so that's how we got together. So all right straight through until he served as a [circuit court] judge in Honolulu. We got in contact. He's gone now, but I still remember him as one of my close friends.

DT: All right we've—maybe we can handle it this way. Let's run a few names in front of you, and just quick comments about what you, if you didn't have any comment, have no comment, or have no recollection, why just say so. If you have something say, why let's have it.

YA: All right.

DT: Jimmy [James K.] Kealoha, who was mayor down there on the Big Island, Republican.

YA: No, he was a [Hawai'i] County Chairman [predecessor to "mayor"].

DT: Oh, excuse me. You're quite correct, I stand corrected.

YA: Well, let me explain to you who is Kealoha. Kealoha is a part-Hawaiian man. His background is working class. Original close relationship with was Harry [L.] Kamoku. Harry Kamoku was organizer of the ILWU [Hilo longshoremen]. But for some reason, we wanted him to run as a Democrat, but he chose, at that time, that he can get elected when he was a Republican. Well that didn't pan out too well with us. Although we were distasteful, I think he served three terms, reelected, reelected, reelected. Then we couldn't do too much. George Martin, who was [Big Island ILWU] Division director, was very close to him. And George Martin did everything possible to have Kealoha endorsed by the ILWU. But in the Hawaii County PAC, if you don't have unanimous endorsement, each unit has the right to endorse or not to endorse on the unit level. Kealoha never got one endorsement from the ILWU. Not one. Because Olaa, we always vetoed him. That's what happened with Kealoha.

DT: So he was not exactly your cup of tea?

YA: No, he's not.

DT: By the same token, let me try this, just briefly. Did you ever meet a more charming political personality than Jimmy Kealoha, just as a person?

YA: No, no, he's a very charming person. Very charming person. He's very nice when you come in [his] office and it's—well I don't accept just charming is the only answer to my belief . . .

DT: Well, I could have used the word charismatic, you know.

YA: Yeah.

DT: Well, I just share my view with you, for whatever it's worth here. And that is I don't think I've ever encountered a more charming political personality, just on that count alone.

YA: No, I agree. I agree. Yeah, right. Your observation is perfect.

(Laughter)

DT: Okay, next name, Stanley [I.] Hara.

YA: Stanley Hara, I supported him in every race that he ran. And he came to the PAC program—I was chairman many times, PAC—and he adhered to everything that we asked him to do for labor. So if you check the record, Mr. Hara got [ILWU] endorsement in every election he ran. Whether it was the house or the senate. In fact, for your information, when the vacancy occurred in the senate, he was a house member. I lobbied with Governor Burns to have him be appointed [in 1969] until the next election to the senate. I did it. Okay, that's Senator Hara.

DT: So a pretty good clean bill of health. What about Shun[ichi] Kimura?

YA: Well, Shun Kimura is a very interesting fellow. He was a law partner of Nelson [K.] Doi. And one day I called him, and I said, "Hey Shun, someday are you going to be a politician? I hope so." I said, "Look, why don't you come to the next county committee meeting. We going to push for Mrs. [Helene H.] Hale to become the [Hawai'i] County chairman. And what you can do to help me is you gotta expose yourself. How you gonna do it? You go be the campaign chairman for the Hawai'i County. And that year Mrs. Hale was running for county chairman. In other words, you're gonna push for every endorsed Democrat on the primary and general. So what we gonna do is we going try get commitment from every nominee in the primary, to come to a meeting, and I will talk to them, and you will listen. Then we'll make a commitment. This is the kind of commitment I'm going to get from them."

I said that "None of the nominees on primary gonna talk stink about personality stuff against their fellow nominee. Okay, that's one. Second, you address to the Democratic rallies." We had rallies on this island, all Democratic on every plantation, okay. So we get rally in Olaa, we get rally in Pāhoa, we get rally in Mountain View. You know, we get rally all over the place. Sponsored by the Democratic party. So anyone who wants to join the Democratic party rally must make this commitment. That first, no talk stink about the next guy. The next thing is, before you sit down, you say to the audience, "If in case I'm not nominated, I will support the nominee." These two things they gotta tell in front the audience.

So Kimura said, "Well okay, I go follow that."

And the first place was in Pāhoa. Kimura was there because he got to go every rally, right, he's a campaign chairman. Then he called me up, he said, "Yasu, Mr. Cunningham, running for the house of representative, forgot to say that he will support the nominee."

So when he came to the Olaa rally, I went to see Mr. Cunningham. I said, "Mr. Cunningham, I got a report that you did not follow the commitment you made at that meeting that we held when Shun Kimura was accepted as a general chairman. I'm going to tell you, honestly, if you forget this time, I will go up to the rostrum and I'm going to follow up and tell the audience, this man forgot to make the commitment."

He didn't forget. He spoke. This is the way we build Shun Kimura, to expose him to the public. So he helped, worked hard, elect Mrs. Hale as chairman of the Hawai'i County board of supervisors [later, "mayor"]. Subsequent to that, the two-year term, Mrs. Hale had internal struggle with the people who helped her get elected with who she appointed. There was a problem in the purchasing department. And Ikuo Hisaoka was one of the, you know, strong guys in the council [i.e., board of supervisors]. He was buying lot of stuff from Von Hamm Young, mostly, you know, hospital stuff. And he was sending that to Kohala Hospital, without purchase order. But he was forcing this purchasing (agent) to confirm that purchase, Mrs. Hale found out. So there was an internal struggle. So in order to defend the guy, Kazuhisa Abe came in to defend that guy free of charge without charging any for the lawyer's fee. There was an internal struggle. I tried to straighten out Mrs. Hale. Stubborn, very stubborn woman. So I told Mrs. Hale, "I'm sorry, the next election we're going to get Shun Kimura to become the (next county chairman)."

Then we did that. We told Shun, "You run against Mrs. Hale. We're gonna elect you as the next county chairman." And that's what happened. [Kimura was first elected chairman of

Hawai'i County in 1965. In 1969, the title was changed to mayor.]

I was appointed by Mrs. Hale to the first charter commission, 1963. I was appointed by Shun Kimura, 1967, the third commission, the Hawai'i County charter commission. And, during this period, I was going to Honolulu as a state chairman of the campaign spending commission, and one day the governor asked me, "Yasu, when you going home?"

I said, "Five o'clock."

He said, "Can you see Ben Menor?"

I said, "Yeah, I can." I said, "Why do you want me to talk to Ben?"

He said, "Ask him if we wants to come to Honolulu."

"Honolulu, what's Honolulu for?" I said, "Governor, the supreme court judge?"

He said, "Yeah. Ask him if he wants to talk—call up Bill [William S.] Richardson, the chief justice [of the Hawai'i Supreme Court]. Then, the next thing you go do is ask Shun Kimura if he wants to take the circuit bench, Menor's place. And if he wants 'em, you call me straight, now. You call me straight and I will submit his name for confirmation in the senate."

So, Shun accepted and he became—he left the county chairman [mayorship in 1974] and [Herbert T.] Matayoshi took over, and Kimura became [circuit court] judge. So many of these political, you know, inner workings. I was the liaison for Governor Burns, for the county of Hawai'i. You know, whether it's Menor or whether it was Shun Kimura. And Shun is still there, he's still our judge up there.

DT: How come Shun Kimura's not governor of Hawai'i today? He has the intellectual capacity to do it. Why did you let him escape from politics, to the bench?

YA: Well, you know, that's one thing, Dan. I cannot lead a horse to the trough if the horse is not hungry or not thirsty, they're not gonna drink. And I never tried. But I want to let you know, what kind of involvement I have on island politics. And some of the connection that went through, I was the liaison. I was the chain.

DT: Okay. Let's see, you probably have nothing to do with this individual, but I'll mention his name anyway. What about Richard Henderson, a Republican?

YA: You mean Senator Richard Henderson? I have no direct contact, association with him, because he's a Republican, I never go too near to Republican, other than my father-in-law. So I don't know too much about Richard.

DT: So you don't have any impression, good Republican, bad Republican—no good Republican? (Chuckles) I'm kidding you. [Toshio] Serizawa?

YA: Well, Serizawa originally came from Kaua'i. And he was a branch manager for Hawaiian Airlines. I think he was elected member of the house in Kaua'i, so he came as a house of representative. And when he came to Hawai'i, we got him elected from Hawai'i. And he was

one of the very close, close friends of Governor Burns. So Serizawa and [Stanley I.] Hara and myself were the ones that picked Scrub Tanaka to be the campaign coordinator for Burns. Burns instructed us three to determine who gonna be the campaign manager for him on this island. So that's the reason why I know Serizawa very well.

DT: Nelson Doi.

YA: Nelson Doi, when we organized the union, I had to bring my class to learn parliamentary procedure because we gotta conduct meetings. So he was our first instructor in parliamentary procedure at the (Hilo) Boys' Club. And I was able to get every precinct—no, every unit on this island, the leaders elected, to go to class conducted by Nelson Doi. He was our parliamentary procedure instructor. That's how we got to know him very closely. So every race he ran, we supported him. That's how, that's the connection. He was our teacher.

DT: Okay, very good. Joe [Joseph R.] Garcia.

YA: Joe Garcia, I never supported him because he's a Republican. Furthermore, I was a union leader and he was, in fact, an enemy because he was representing the [Hakalau Plantation] Company, as the industrial relations director. So the head-on clash we get with the company trying to settle grievances, this is with industrial relations director, and he was industrial relation director for Hakalau [Plantation Company] and later became for [C.] Brewer & company. So we didn't have too much, you know, close association. But I going tell you one secret though. One day I was in Governor Burns' home in Washington Place. After I had one talk with Governor, I was going out. And I see one lonely man coming in, walking into Washington Place. And none other than Joe Garcia. Later on, I asked Joe, "Why is it that you, singly, the governor invite you to come and talk to him?"

"Well, you know, Yasu, even though I'm a Republican, he wants to know the pulse of the rest of the Republicans. Where we gonna have a head-on clash, if in case you want to compromise what the governor's group gotta do to have the Republican vote." He was the pulse for the governor. So you can see, something that you folks don't know, I know. Garcia was very close to the governor.

DT: You have a name? I've got another one here if you don't. It's your turn I think, this time, Michiko.

MK: I was thinking of Richard Lyman, Jr.

YA: Oh, Richard Lyman, Jr., he was a supervisor in Olaa Sugar [Company]. I knew him well, I knew the family well. Very nice guy. But again you know, he's not my party. You know, he's Republican. So I ran against him, on the [1950] constitutional convention, and for some reason, I lost in Pāhoa, because he's very close with all the families in Pāhoa. I lost in Kalapana. Wherever there was strong Hawaiian group, I got smashed. I lost [by] few votes, only about sixteen votes, but I lost. So, you know, I have no bitterness against him, he represented well for Puna in the first territorial constitutional convention. He's a nice guy.

DT: This was the '50 convention.

YA: Yeah, the early one, yeah.

MK: And then I was wondering if you had anymore [William H.] "Doc" Hill remembrances. You mentioned that your sister was his housekeeper.

YA: My sister was the housekeeper, yes. But let me tell you something about Doc Hill and his wife. When my son applied for Kamehameha School, he wasn't accepted. And their questioning was my son don't have Hawaiian blood, even though my son is a grandson of senator Julian Yates and my father-in-law [Yates] is half Hawaiian. So when he was rejected, I was happy because, you know, my son didn't have to leave here, he can go to public school. Mrs. Hill was very unhappy. Told my sister, "I understand your nephew going to Kamehameha School."

"No, he was rejected."

"Why was he rejected?"

"Oh, because he's not part-Hawaiian."

So Mrs. Hill made a party for all the [Kamehameha Schools/Bishop Estate] trustees in Keauhou Beach home. Get a party for them. Then after the party, they introduce my sister to them and said, "This is Mrs. Morioka. This is Garfield's aunty."

"Who's Garfield?"

"Oh, the boy that applied for Kamehameha that you folks reject 'em."

"What? Did we reject?"

The trustees don't reject, it's the, you know, the group in the school. So they took Garfield's name, they went back. Then they checked the family tree again. And we got a letter that he's going to be accepted. And I told my sister, "Thanks but no thanks. My boy is not going to Kamehameha School."

So when she said this to Mrs. Hill, Mrs. Hill said, "Look, Masako, we went all the trouble to call a nice party for the trustees at the Keauhou Beach home. Now they accept and you all are going to reject 'em? You make monkey out of us? You can't do that!"

That's the reason why Garfield graduate Kamehameha School. So that's . . .

DT: So you caved in?

YA: Huh?

DT: You caved in?

YA: Well, in that case (DT laughs), you know, it's kind of embarrassing for all the trouble my sister guys went through. Make a big party for them, you know. So he went.

(Laughter)

DT: Are you sure to this day whether the party was just for him or not?

YA: I think it was for him, because my sister really did good service to the Hill family. We're all part of the family, you know.

DT: Okay. (Chuckles) Dante Carpenter.

YA: Well, interesting thing, you know, when Dante Carpenter was rejected by the PAC, I went home and told my wife. I said, "I'm sorry but we never get endorsement for Dante," I said.

"What happened?"

"Well, he get some problem with his brother in Honolulu. We get instruction from Honolulu PAC, not to endorse Carpenter."

Because I think the brother had something to do with the Teamsters union, I think. I'm guessing. So my wife said, "I hate to tell you, but you folks never endorse one part-Hawaiian, yeah. You go your way, I go my way."

"What you going do?"

"I'm going to support Carpenter."

My wife is half Hawaiian and Carpenter is half Hawaiian, yeah. And so, you know, it's racial.

And one day, I saw her baking big sheet cake, you know. Big one. She made eight chocolate sheet cake. I said, "Where this going?"

"Fundraiser for Carpenter, down at [Hilo] Civic Auditorium."

"Oh." I didn't say nothing.

"You go down the anthurium patch, go cut all the flowers."

I said, "What for?"

"You just cut the flowers. You just cut the flowers."

So I cut 'em, put 'em in the bucket. And I said, "Where you going with this?"

"I'm going to the stadium."

She took the sheet cake, she took the flowers. She decorate the stage. She cut all the cakes. All the fundraisers, they give cake. So my wife is telling me, "You mind your own business, I mind mine."

As soon as my kids found out that the ILWU, PAC, they never endorse him, and Mama is supporting Carpenter, the whole family supported my wife. And then, from that day on, until

today, until Carpenter gets smashed, my whole family supported Carpenter, financially, cake, flower, everything. (Chuckles) I'm sorry he got defeated, but too bad, he's gone.

DT: You can't win 'em all, can you?

YA: No, cannot.

DT: Couple quickies, real quickies. We're just about out of time here and maybe just one.

JC: We've got two minutes.

DT: May I mention Joe [Joseph] Napolitan. Ever heard of him?

YA: Who?

DT: Joe Napolitan.

YA: No, I don't know.

DT: Okay, that tells us something itself. Jack Seigle?

YA: No, I don't know.

DT: Okay, your turn.

MK: How about John [T.] Ushijima.

YA: Oh, okay. John was my attorney, my family attorney. He was very close to Senator Yates. When Senator Yates was the majority party, he took care of John. When he became a minority party, John take care of Grandpa. They were very extremely close. That's how I got to know John. So he became my family attorney. In fact, when my father-in-law drafted the deed, I was the executor of the estate. John made the papers. I took care his funeral, I took care all his financial obligations. I paid up everything what he told me to pay. And again, John did all the paperwork for me.

END OF INTERVIEW

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